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History of Xitsonga-Speaking Tribes

Their language and settlement patterns in southern Africa

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VONAKANI MALULEKE

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Preface

After finishing high school and begun to embark on higher education studies in the fields of psychology and literature, I started to realise the importance of early childhood history. One of the most important things I learned from early childhood psychology class is that childhood is a very important phase in life where each person learns the basics of social behaviour, cultural traits, and language. Into adulthood many of us then begin to have the desire to learn even the influences and impact of what we learned in childhood. So into my studies in Psychology and English Literature I noticed that just as each one of us goes through childhood stages where we learn a lot of different things, so does each social/cultural/language group. A particular tribe or an ethnic group has its own early childhood stages too, where the foundations of social norms, cultural values, and language are all built. This realization made me interested in learning about the early stages of my own ethnic group in particular, from which I dedicated a lot of time (11 years) to studying the history and origins of the people and their language in order to better understand their sense of identity and belonging in the modern world.

This research is an uncensored history guide for lessons on Tsonga History. It gives an analysis of the historical movements and cultural significance of the Xitsonga-speaking people of southern Africa. The book is best suited for teaching and learning purposes. It also looks at commonly misinterpreted historical factors and offers an alternative view of looking at history. References are given where necessary in an effort to collect as much reliable information as possible, while linking these to oral traditions and local folklore in order to come to a better understanding of history. Sources were carefully analysed and those that correlate more with known traditions, oral history, and the praise poetry of the Xitsonga-speaking people are especially pointed out.

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THE XITSONGA LANGUAGE

The development of the Xitsonga language has taken a very interesting course, and to investigate its history is tantamount to attaining some form of enlightenment to the essence of its origin. Where one does not know the history of one's own language, it leaves room for speculation and the integrity of that language is compromised. People without access to reliable educational resources often run the risk of reaching the false conclusion that Xitsonga was somehow "invented" by Swiss Missionaries or that it is a dialect of the Zulu language or part of Nguni. This chapter on language intends to refute this false belief and provides valid evidence to show that the Swiss Missionaries who contributed to the standardization of the Xitsonga language actually did not understand the language at all when they first became involved in it, and that, instead, they put the same language on paper that was already spoken by the Tsonga people for many years before the arrival of the missionaries in the 1800s. This analysis contains a brief summary of historical research describing how the Xitsonga language developed as a common language; how it has been affected by foreign influences; and how the language is standardized for literacy purposes.

The Xitsonga language as it is known today is historically related to the first written language called 'Tonga' or 'Thonga' spoken in Mozambique and South Africa, and it is a name closely related to language groups of ancient origin found mainly within the countries of Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The Tonga languages of Zambia and Malawi – languages that have distinct characteristics, have a similar term which is probably the result of the ancient relationship between old African groups before colonization (Hopgood 1992). Berthoud (1884, p. 50-55) also points this out this old relationship when referring to Gwamba (Xitsonga) that "Among Middle Branch languages, the idioms which approach nearest to Gwamba are those

of Sena and Tete”, which may give an idea of the ancient affinity with the Sena and other tribes known as Tonga who have been located in the southern parts of Malawi or Tete and central parts of Mozambique.

The various Tonga groups in different parts of southern Africa are listed in many texts as some of the earliest African groups who are also related to the Nguni, Sotho, Karanga, Venda, as well as the ancient people known as “San” who they interacted with in the early periods of history where much assimilation took place. The Tonga people of Mozambique are African groups who have a recorded history below the Zambezi River stretching into the period of 400AD (Maluleke 2021). Tonga groups have over the years spread from far and wide and formed various settlements in southern and eastern Africa, and, in South Africa too, early Tonga groups have contributed significantly to territorial and cultural development.

Over time the ancient Tonga language which began to develop among Xitswa speakers reached the point of development that came to be referred to as Xitsonga. This occurred after the various Tonga of southern Mozambique, the Embo, and Karanga groups of Zimbabwe merged with the original eastern groups locally known as the Vatswa (Munguambe 2000). Today these are all southern Africans and have lived in these areas for hundreds of years. Research in linguistics shows a strong relationship between the Xitswa language (sometimes spelled “Tshwa”) and Xitsonga, which made a very important and lasting impression in the whistled fricative that dominates in the speech of the Tsonga people (Shosted 2012). The Xitswa language can be considered to belong to the eastern branch of a group of the San who are closer to the Tsonga who today also have a whistle sound when they speak.

Some may express doubt that there were San-related Bushmen found in southern Mozambique who spoke a language similar to Xitsonga in ancient times. In terms of the native intellect of African culture, they were not San by name, but were considered to be very similar to the Tsonga of old in the

sense that they were all Africans who lived a common bush life of hunting and the gathering of agriculture. To the Europeans, it has mostly been “the Bushmen” in literature as defined in a way of showing how those people were different from those who came after them (Hall 1909), and in their own way of showing that the first people lived mostly in the bush, makes the original natives to be seen as less civilised than the “*Bantu*”. Apart from identifying the first people in Mozambique in relation to the Tsonga, it is important to know that among the first Tonga people of Mozambique there was already a variety of African “Bush life” people in the south. The people they found in their present settlements of southern Mozambique were what we today call Vatswa, most traceably those who called themselves with the name of the Makwakwa region, in old records the by the Arabs misspelled as “Wakwak” (Maluleke 2021). They were called Vatswa by the early Tonga as a distinguishing term for natives or pygmies.

Early interactions of the Tonga (popularised in old literature as Thonga/Rhonga) with the Vatswa actually gave a strong distinction to the “Tswa-Ronga” language grouping, under which the use of the Tsonga language in South Africa was later codified.

Furthermore, it is important to review some of the most important terms used in this document, namely the terms “language” and “dialect”.

What is meant by “language”?

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2006, p. 829) defines language as “the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area”, which in other terms is the means of communication in speech and writing used by people of a particular country or region.

This definition clearly defines language as the use of words or symbols orally or in writing where the message can be understood by one or more recipients. This definition is compatible with what is known as the Tsonga language (Xitsonga), as all people who can speak or write the language can understand each other even through its various dialects, whether in speaking or writing.

What is meant by "dialect"?

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2006, p. 402) defines a dialect as "the form of a language that is spoken in one area with grammar, words and pronunciation that may be different from other forms of the same language". The meaning here is that the language spoken in a particular place will differ slightly in terms of pronunciation, the structure of words, and in accent, which however still shows a close relationship with other forms of that language.

This definition makes it clear that a language is essentially a combination of dialects of that language, in which case the dialects can be identified according to geographical location or settlement patterns of the people. The most important aspect to be emphasized by the definition is that a difference is considered in relation to another particularly when there is a match with that language group in terms of grammar, pronunciation or spelling of words. Some words within one particular dialect may not be present in another, yet most words of the dialect must be considered sufficiently similar to the other dialects in order for them to be considered part of the same language group, and speakers must sufficiently understand each other.

This description is consistent with the dialects identified from Xitsonga speakers by Henri Alexandri Junod who had identified several related dialects of which some have today developed into languages with their own sub-dialects (such as Rhonga), of which he then classified them under the “Thonga language”. Dialects identified were Xironga, Xihlanganu, Xidjonga, Xibila, Xin’walungu, and Xihlengwe.

An example of variation in some given dialects is the Xitsonga word “*tindimi*” (tongues) pronounced “*tindjimi*” in Xironga and Xidjonga; “*tirimi*” in Xihlanganu and Xibila; and “*tindimi*” in Xin’walungu and Xihlengwe.

Another example of a grammar difference in the other words given in the Xitsonga language for “*tiko leri*” is “*tiko ledji*” in Xironga; “*tiko leri*” in Xihlanganu and Xidjonga; “*tiko leli*” in Xibila; “*tiko ledyi*” in Xin’walungu; and “*tiko legi*” in Xihlengwe.

The Xitsonga language and its dialects have many times been referred to by names of tribal leaders or lineages. This is somehow often when there is a leader who has become very famous among his people, and then it comes to the point where people name a language or dialect after that leader; for example: Xibila because of the Bila lineage, Xinkuna because of the Nkuna lineage, Xiluleke because of the Maluleke lineage, Xikhambani because of the Khambani lineage, Xigwamba because of the Gwambe lineage, and Xichangane because of the Shangane lineage. Below we look at this interesting dynamic with the example of two names that have been widely used in history books to refer to the Tsonga language, namely the terms “Xigwamba” and “Xichangana”.

What is Xigwamba?

The term “Xigwambal” is used frequently in old missionary literature of the late 1800s and in modern discourse in an attempt to distinguish the old Tsongas from their past neighbours. The use of the term in modern times has strictly been aimed at the study of the history of the Tsonga language and should not be seen as a term that today is still used for the language or entirety of Tsonga tribes in genealogical history (Berthoud 1884). At present it should be noted that the term Gwamba or Kwapa was preferred by groups of the Karanga and related tribes of today's Limpopo Province, the Lobedu and Venda tribes among others, to refer to the Xitsonga-speaking tribes of the Kalanga or Rozwi led by one of their leaders better known as Gwambe, who is thought to have come to power in the period around the 1600s and led a section of his people from Zimbabwe to settle among the people of Northern Limpopo. As time went on “Gwambe” came to be pronounced “Gwamba” and even “*kwapa*” by the Pedi and Venda, and written as such in the works of missionaries (Berthoud 1896).

“Ba-Suto people cannot pronounce the word “Ma-Gwamba,” they find it too soft and too nasal, and therefore they change it into “Ma-Koapa.” Again, a German traveller would make this “Ma-Koaba” – (Berthoud 1884, p. 46)

In South Africa it was mainly the Europeans missionaries who first wrote of a particular Gwamba language, and they tried to group the Tsonga according to the popular views of the time, where they referred to the Tsonga people using the terminology “Gwamba people” or “Magwamba”. As time progressed after the late 1800s “Gwamba” became seen in a derogatory manner by the northern Sotho although the name does not seem to have originally had a derogatory meaning for a group of people. In fact the word itself was also associated with the button-shaped tattooing of the ancient Tsonga in the form of “*magwaba*” (documented as *Knobneus* by the Boers),

which gives a perspective on the old naming patterns where words used to refer to individuals may have also referred to a particular cultural practice. In other terms the word Gwamba was even used to refer to an omen or an old spirit (Berthoud 1896). Regardless of the other terminology the name was used by the missionaries to refer to the Tsonga of the Transvaal, which Harries (1987) argues was without sufficient consensus. Patrick Harries suggests this in writing:

“Gwamba was not just the term used to describe a hypothetical linguistic group: it had become the name of a people conceptualized in the European mind, because of their perceived linguistic affiliation, as a tribe or nation. By imposing their European world view and logic on the confusing array of peoples surrounding them, the missionaries had created political and linguistic categories that were derived more from their specific epistemology than from any local social reality.” – (Harries 1987, p. 23)

The preachers of the Swiss churches who are by some people ignorantly given the ideological credit of having “invented” the Xitsonga language in fact had no prior knowledge of the language or how to speak it when they first learned it in South Africa. Paul Berthoud, who was one of the first Europeans to work in South Africa through the Swiss Mission in 1872, only understood the language of the Sotho and Pedi tribes as known at the time, and, the purpose of the first attempt at literacy in the north of the country was to convert the local Sepedi-speaking people to Christianity, and the mission expanded their work towards those who were later called “Makwapa/Magwamba” by the Bapedi, Balobedu and Venda. Therefore, it was only in 1875 that Henri Berthoud met a group of citizens who spoke the Tsonga language or one of its dialects which the Balobedu called “*sekwapa*”. The real Magwamba/*Makwapa* in particular were seen to have some historical connection with a group of families calling themselves the people of Gwambe who migrated periodically from Mozambique to South Africa.

As early as 1878 Henri Berthoud and collaborator Ernest Creux had started learning “sigwamba” and then begun to produce some songs and translations that would enable them to write a book, and it was clearly pointed out at that time that they faced enormous difficulties in learning the language (Xitsonga), a fact that debunks the notion of a Swiss missionary invention of the language (Harries 1987).

barely mutually comprehensible. Some six months after his arrival in the area, Henri Berthoud wrote despondently that

Despite my utmost I cannot yet preach in sigwamba; I can make myself understood depending on the intelligence and goodwill of those listening to me. As far as understanding the natives, it is altogether another thing; each one has his own particular dialect and often I cannot understand a word of what they are saying. That is what slows down the understanding of the language, that one has to learn numerous different dialects before understanding a conversation.²⁰

(Image source: Henri Berthoud cited in Harries 1987, p. 13-14)

The Swiss missionaries were entirely dependent on the Tsonga-speaking people for guidance in writing the language. Harries points out the following in this regard:

“He [Henri Berthoud] considered a thorough knowledge of the language essential to the work of evangelisation and devoted each afternoon to its study. By June 1882 Henri Berthoud and a Christian assistant, probably Mpapele (Mbizana) or Mandlati (Zambiki), were engaged in translating parts of the Old Testament from Sesotho into Shigwamba. But without a Shigwamba grammar, dictionary or even a reader, translation was slow and often erroneous and the missionaries had still to rely on the Sesotho publications of the Paris Missionary Society.” – (Harries 1987, p. 12)

Similarly to how it was done with other language groups, with the help of native speakers, in 1883 the first Christian book in "Shigwamba" in South Africa was published and Henri Berthoud had begun to preach in that language, even though he had not perfectly mastered the language enough to be better than its native speakers. That same year, his brother Paul Berthoud had begun publishing scholarly works and Bible texts in Switzerland in the language that his associates had begun to learn. One of these books was titled "*Tshikwembo Tsinwe na Tisimo ta Hlengeletano*", which today is written in standardized Xitsonga as "*Xikwembu Xin'we ni Tinsimu ta Nhlengeletano*").

The missionaries, plucked from their well-structured lives in Europe and plunged into an unfamiliar and confusing world, soon adopted the local mode of classification. Within weeks of her arrival, Paul Berthoud's wife Eugénie wrote that the local language was "Shigwamba...(of which)...we cannot understand a single word...(as it)...is completely different from Sesotho." Clinging to the missionaries' desire for a vehicular language and trapped within the bounds of existing linguistic knowledge, she postulated that Shigwamba was "more related to the Zulu of Natal" than to Sesotho.⁹ But within three months it had become clear to the missionaries that Shigwamba did not fit into the existing schema of African languages. Paul Berthoud informed his church head-quarters that "we speak Sesotho but no-one understands us. We must learn (what in Sesotho is called) "Sekoapa". the language of the Gwambas.¹⁰

(Image source: Harries 1987)

There were separate migrations of the Vatsonga between Mozambique and South Africa from about the 1640s of various groups led by the Van'wanati, Vahlengwe, Khosa and Valoyi tribes, who also lived in the areas near or within the Kruger National Park and many had a particular dialect of Xin'walungu and Xihlengwe. Most to the east on the Mozambique coast were groups related to the Hlengwe, Hlanganu, Rhonga, N'wanati, Tswa and many others who had not been taken into account linguistically through much of the work of the first Tsonga Bible translations in South Africa, therefore the standardization of Xitswa and Xironga was different from that of Xitsonga in South Africa. The fact that the Tsonga language had different dialects was accepted by the missionaries. The language itself began from the early 1900s to be affected by some influences from the Venda-speaking community, Afrikaans, and English because of the proximity of the Tsonga to these language groups and by the missionaries not taking enough time to search for many missing words during their translations, however, the people preserved their language and dialects and this is evident from studies conducted by the Swiss Mission and the social standard later in the years of the late 1900s to today where the Tsonga still mostly speak in a native vernacular rather than in a literary way. The Tsonga who lived in northern South Africa in the 1600s, 1700s, 1800s... have long spoken a language that is common to them, different only on the basis of dialect or otherwise, and which should not be restricted by the spelling or the way the language was first written that was referred to as "Xigwamba".

The spelling and orthographic rules of "Xigwamba" and those of Xitsonga as we know it today are very different (compare with Berthoud 1884, p. 52-73), because, over time the rules of writing and spelling in Xitsonga were improved by the native speakers themselves who were more experienced in the language than the missionaries. This is one of the reasons why many Xitsonga speakers will find it easier to read a book written in today's Xitsonga than to read a 19th century book written in "Xigwamba" as the missionaries misspelled a lot of words and the grammar was very poor.

Many speakers of the Xitsonga language themselves were unfamiliar with the names “Magwamba” and “Xigwamba” and there was difficulty in accepting the name among the people outside of Spelonken (Xipilongo), so the missionaries chose to use an older name that was common and accepted by many inhabitants. This is outlined in the following quote:

“As the term Gwamba was unknown outside the Spelonken, Henri Berthoud recommended that the mission abandon the term and replace it with the widely accepted genericism, Tonga/Thonga” – (Harries 1987, p. 16)

The question “what is Xigwamba?”, can be answered by the fact that Xigwamba was the first attempt at understanding and codifying the Tsonga language on the part of the first missionaries to learn about the Tsonga people and their language in South Africa.

What is Xichangana?

Various groups in parts of the Limpopo province often use the term “Xichangana/Xichangani” either literally or in reference to Xitsonga. Manukuse Soshangane, from whom the names “machangane” and “xichangane” are derived from, was one of the warriors under the Ndwandwe who fought with the Zulus under Shaka. He migrated with his people from what is today KwaZulu Natal to the old country in Vutsonga, Mozambique. History shows that Soshangane settled there from about the 1820s after the Tsonga language and its dialects had developed considerably. He arrived amongst the Tsonga-related groups when he and his followers still spoke the Lala language (one of the old Nguni languages related to Tefuya). Their language however was swallowed up in the process and they began to speak in the language of the people they encountered.

The rulership of the Gaza Nguni of Soshangane in Mozambique began in the 1820s and ended in the 1890s when Gaza was defeated in a war in which their tribal leader, Nghunghunyane, was captured and exiled under Portuguese colonial rule. The Gaza Ngoni rule in Mozambique can be said to have lasted no more than 71 years. When the Gaza tribes later broke up and migrated to the Tsonga areas within South Africa they adopted the language of the local people who had long since established themselves there, and had no alternative but to learn the languages offered in the schools. Many of them were struggling to ignore their Nguni language, which was commonly spoken in their families in prior years.

The integration of certain words originally belonging to the Nguni languages by various Tsonga and Nguni people in social life has, no doubt, led people to identify what they call the “shangaan dialect” or “*shichangana*”. Nguni words such as “*ku qgina*” – which in Xitsonga is “*ku hela*”; “*nghoma*” – which is “*risimu*”; “*nqondo*” – which is “*nhloko*”, “*ku khuluma*” – which is “*ku vulavula*”, “*mufundisi*” – which is “*mudyondzisi*”, and “*ku zama*” – which is “*ku ringeta*”, are combined periodically in the everyday speech of many Tsonga people, and a few words from languages such as Afrikaans and English have been “borrowed” even to stand in place for missing words in standard Xitsonga lessons in educational institutions. This shows the reason for differences in the words that are originally of Xitsonga and Nguni, for example the word “*ku khuluma*” which is commonly used in Bushbuckridge where the amaShangane Tribal Authority is located, is different from “*ku vulavula*” which is used in the Xitsonga-speaking communities of Limpopo. In the cases where some say that Xichangana is Xitsonga, to put it this way contradicts the origins of the Xitsonga language and could be seen to overshadow the factuality of the language and its developmental timespan within the lexicography system and rules of articulation, as the word “*xichangana*” is used even in everyday situations where the speaker often speaks entirely in Xitsonga without using any Nguni or borrowing words. This widespread misconception does not often take into account some real

dialects that have existed since olden times before colonialism, and that have been studied by linguists, such as other major dialects of Xin'walungu, Xihlanganu, Xibila, Xidzonga, Xinkuna of Tzaneen, and Xihlengwe of Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Mabaso (2007, p. 318) asserts that Shangani spoken in Zimbabwe has become somewhat different from Xitsonga:

“Zimbabwean Shangani now has some peculiar features of phonology and vocabulary which differ from Tsonga” – (Mabaso 2007, p. 318).

The Nguni languages themselves, although a little similar to Xitsonga, are historically distinct from the Xitsonga language and many of the rules of Nguni languages do not correspond to those of Xitsonga. This is why it sounds foreign to many of the Vatsonga to refer to themselves as “Matsonga” in the Xitsonga language, but on the other hand it would be familiar to the amaShangane to refer to the Nguni Shangaans as “maChangane” since the name is actually derived from “*amaShangane*” within the Nguni language group. The correct pronunciation of the name when referring to the Tsonga people, in contrast, is actually VATSONGA in the sense that it is linguistically correct to say, for example, VHAVENDA in the Venda language of northern Limpopo (Vavhenda in Xitsonga) instead of “Mavenda”; BASOTHO in the Sotho language (Vasuthu in Xitsonga) instead of “Masotho”. In Xitsonga, the rule applies to the prefix “Va-” when referring to Va-Nhu or a race of people, for example VALUNGU instead of “Malungu”; VANDAWU instead of “Mandawu”; VAHLENGWE instead of “Mahlengwe”. In certain instances the prefix “Ma-” is only applied to the name of an individual who is given a name according to a particular activity or settlement history, for example “Madzive” from the verb “*ku dziva*”; or “Maluleke” from the verb “*ku luleka*”. The prefix “Va-” in Xitsonga is always used in reference to a collective of people, tribes, ethnic groups, or a race of people. Individuals and surnames that are derived from the names of individuals in many instances use both the “Va-” and “Ma-” prefixes in Xitsonga.

There are other areas of language history that deserve attention by first understanding the societies, communities in which they live, and the history of migration and land settlement. Henri A. Junod (1912) studied the various Tsonga dialects in great detail and analyzed their role in the overall history of the Tsonga-speaking people in his work titled 'The Life of a South African Tribe', but initially gave no description of the Xichangana language or dialect within the influence of Xitsonga itself. Henri Junod himself was definitely not the first to document the Tsonga language and its dialects, and even claims he learned a lot of his orthography for dialects like the Hlanganu, Khosa, Nkuna, Hlengwe, and N'wanati from local reverends such as Rev. H. Guye, Rev. P. Loze, and Rev. S. Malale (Junod 1912, p. 468).

The issue of gaining a complete understanding when it comes to Xichangana as a language may also be difficult due to the fact that there is uncertainty about its status as a spoken and written language:

“Connected to the issue of orthography, is the debate among members of the reference group about the status of Shangani. They are divided on whether to treat Shangani as an independent language from Tsonga or just as a Tsonga dialect. Those who argue that Shangani is a Tsonga dialect feel that it is need-less to waste money and resources on issues of standardizing the language. Advocating the harmonization of Shangani and Tsonga spoken in neighbouring countries, they want to adopt the South African or Mozambican Tsonga orthography. However, they agree with those who prefer a unique Zimbabwean orthography, that Shangani now has some peculiar features from Tsonga although they believe that these features can be harmonized. Those who want a different orthography from the Tsonga of neighbouring countries, argue that Shangani is no longer a Tsonga dialect, but an autonomous language with its own dialects.” – (Mabaso 2007, p. 318).

The reason for the two names used interchangeably to refer to the Xitsonga language (Xitsonga and Xichangana), is due to the wars of 1820-1890 fought between the amaShangane and Xitsonga speaking groups. At the outbreak of these wars, the Soshangana family and their followers spoke one of the Nguni languages or dialects, such as Lala (*isiLala*). In recent times it has become clear that the Gaza Nguni finally adopted a particular Tsonga form of the language after they had been sucked into the Tsonga language and their native language had become lost in the grand scheme of things, in the same way that the Tembe of northern KwaZulu Natal had to learn isiZulu at school. One of the early historians who has seen the old Tsonga customs and learned about the people and their language confirms this fact with the following:

“I do not think they [the Bangoni] would have been able to uproot the old language which must have been spoken for many centuries in Thonga territory. My conclusion is then that the Thonga language was already-spoken by the primitive occupants of the country more than 500 years ago and that, together with a certain number of customs, it formed the great bond which bound the Thonga clans together in past centuries.” – (Junod 1912, p. 33)

Relationships of Xitsonga with other languages

The Xitsonga language is more similar to the Nguni languages than to languages like Sesotho, Tshivenda and Karanga, and this often may lead people to the erroneous conclusion that Xitsonga is somehow “born” or derived from Zulu. Languages that extend from a common branch usually have many similarities. Some Xitsonga speakers take a long time to examine the origins of their language, and, although many of them include other

words that also exist in Nguni, Afrikaans, and English in their speech on a daily basis, this is largely due to the interaction that has taken place with these neighbouring groups. Various Tsonga groups, such as the Varhonga or Vatembe, used many terms related to modern Zulu even before the Zulu tribe emerged as a powerful kingdom in Natal (Kloppers 2003, p. 42), which is another indication that the Rhonga-speaking groups, as well as the Tembe, had a strong influence from their neighbours in what is now KwaZulu Natal. In addition to this, it is important to know that the Nguni and Sotho language groups have been historically influenced by the old Shona, San, and Rhonga languages, additionally the reason why the language groups of the Northern Sotho (Sepedi and Lovedu) and Venda also became closely related to the Shona language.

Over time the Tsonga language spoken at home was affected by words from different languages, borrowing randomly not only from Nguni but also from their neighbours in the Limpopo. For example, when coming across someone who is working, some Tsonga people will use the greeting "*vashumi*" which means "workers", a word from Tshivenda and it appears to come from the nearby Venda tribes of northern Limpopo and is probably connected as well with the Vanyayi who are found in different parts of the Tsonga communities. Some examples of words in Tshivenda used by some of the Tsonga are "*golonyi*" which comes from Tshivenda "*goloji*" (car) – which in Xitsonga is properly "*xipandzamananga*"; and "*nden'wa*" meaning "*toya*" in Xitsonga, among many other borrowed words. The everyday Xitsonga language spoken at home also borrows words from Afrikaans and English, such as "*fasitere* (from *fenster* in Afrikaans)"; "*bilomu* (from *blom* in Afrikaans), which in English are the words for "window" and "flower" respectively. Other example words from English are "*nghilazi*" for "glass"; and "*bakete* (bucket)", among many others of which are widely used as the various Tsonga tribes in South Africa have borrowed words from Afrikaans and English for a lack of a common usage of proper words in their language that have been forgotten or lost with the passing of time. There are many

other examples, but this is just a point to emphasize that the Xitsonga language should not be seen to have been affected by one particular ethnic group or modern standards or the history of a particular establishment, as the development of the language and its influences goes beyond any single lineage in the history of the Xitsonga-speaking tribes or even the codification by foreign missionaries.

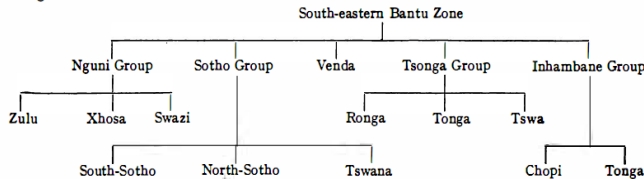
Doke and Vilakazi (1972) in the Zulu Dictionary give a schematic presentation of the different languages under the South-eastern Bantu zone:

NOTE I

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE ZULU LANGUAGE

ZULU is spoken throughout Zululand and Natal, the North-eastern Free State, the South-eastern Transvaal, and the Witwatersrand area, while dialectal forms are found in Ndebele in Matabeleland of Southern Rhodesia, in Ndebele of the Transvaal, and in Ngoni spoken in Nyasaland (particularly on the western side of the Lake) and in parts of Southern Tanganyika.

Zulu belongs to the South-eastern zone of Bantu languages, and its relationships are seen in the following table:



The purest Zulu is spoken in Central and Southern Zululand; in Northern Zululand Tonga influence is felt. Natal proper contributes largely to Zulu with certain modifications. In South Natal this is influenced from Xhosa, in the West from Southern Sotho. In the North of Natal is the Lala dialect bearing the *tekeza* influence of Swazi. In the coastal area from Durban northwards is the Qwaße dialect having the peculiarities of *thefula*. From literary Zulu *tekeza* and *thefula* forms are excluded, as well as influences from Xhosa, Sotho, and Tonga.

The importance of Zulu can be gauged from the fact that it embraces probably more than two million speakers, and in its literary development is growing apace.

(Image source: Doke and Vilakazi 1972)

It is shown by the geography and culture of KwaZulu-Natal that the Tsonga language had a strong influence on the northern parts of that area because people who spoke the more ancient Tonga or Ronga were around that area for a long time, and in fact, many of the kingdom/clan groups found there originate in their ancestry from the lineages of Tembe, Mpfumo, Nyaka, Nondwane, and others.

In terms of standardization many of the Nguni dialects of old have been swallowed up to fall under isiZulu, isiXhosa, and Siswati branches, in much the same way that many of the Tsonga dialects came to be swallowed up to fall under the Xitsonga branch. Therefore, the historical reference to 'Thonga' or 'Tonga' in the South African context is essentially a reference to Xitsonga itself. The Tonga language of KwaZulu-Natal, referred to by Doke and Vilakazi (1972) under the Tsonga language group today, however, is distinct from the Gitonga language of Nyembani (Inhambane) and the two groups can hardly understand one another. The use of the word 'Tonga' in many places reflects the antiquity of the Tsonga name, which confirms the relationship of many South Africans in that they are people of a common African root since ancient times in Africa. In this view the history of the Tonga of South Africa represents one of unity and not division.

Further Comparisons.

The Rev. E. Gottschling further shows¹ the difference between Chikaranga, Se-Sutu, Se-Tonga, and Se-Wenda—

ENGLISH.	CHIKARANGA.	SE-SUTU	SE-TONGA.	SE-WENDA.
Country.	Nyika.	Naxa.	Tiko.	Šango.
River.	Rgigi.	Noka.	Nambo.	Molambo.
To teach.	Ko dzidzisa.	Xo ruta.	Ko dzonda.	O funza.
The will.	Kuta.	Thato.	Rerando.	Lofuno.
Fog.	Mote.	Mouane.	Ntsuvi.	Khuli.
Clouds.	Goti.	Maru.	Mapapa.	Makole.
Time.	Tšenambo.	Lebaka.	Nkari.	Tšefinga.
Blood.	Ropa.	Madi.	Ngadi.	Malofa.
Father.	Bambo.	Tata.	Tatana.	Khotsi.
Stone.	Bge.	Lefzika.	Ribye.	Tombo.
The axe.	Sano.	Selepe.	Seloka.	Mbado.
The door.	Gone.	Lemati.	Rewandi.	Woti.
Above.	Kumsoro.	Godimo.	Henla.	Tadolo.
The sun.	Zoba.	Letšatši.	Dzambo.	Dova.
Water.	Mwura.	Meetsi.	Madi.	Madi.

(Image source: Rev. E. Gottschling cited in Hall 1909, showing a comparison of the Xitsonga language “SE-TONGA” with neighbouring languages)

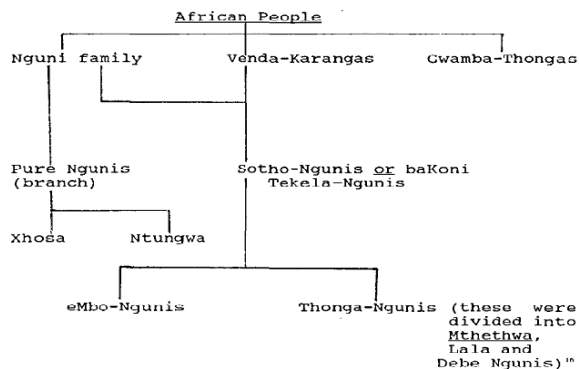
The name 'Xitsonga' has been standardized and passed on in South Africa from 'Tonga' to refer to the language used in education and vernacular use at home. In educational institutions today Xitsonga is taught as the home language and this forms the main foundation on which the language is maintained and integrated in all aspects of reading and writing. Exploring the basis of the language while considering colonial influences will prove fruitless, equally as the borrowed words integrated within Xitsonga and other languages causes disagreements, which will lead to a great deal of confusion within the meaning of language and dialect. In this context, it is worth pointing out that the borrowing of Nguni words within Xitsonga is

similar to the way one can refer to the borrowing of Venda, English, and Afrikaans words within Xitsonga.

Xitsonga and Xirhonga words also had a strong influence on neighboring languages. In his research paper on the history of the Mthethwas, Muzi Mthethwa states the following:

“Since the Mthethwa people lived side-by-side with the Thongas and because of intermarriage between the two language groups, the Mthethwa language was affected and they would also tekela (which is to pronounce words such that where there are "z" one pronounced it "t", "d", etc.)” – (Mthethwa 1995, p. 9)

In the figure below, Mthethwa (1995) shows the ancestral lineage of the various South African tribes, listing also the Mthethwa, Lala, and Debe tribes that arose as a result of the interaction between the Nguni, Karanga, Sotho, and Tsonga who have intermarried since ancient times:



(Image source: Mthethwa 1995)

This representation of Mthethwa supports many of the points made in this book, in particular that the history of the development of South African language groups is closely intertwined with neighbouring communities, and that many of those who today consider themselves part of the Nguni clans in fact share close ties with the Tsonga/Thonga and Karanga/Kalanga tribes. The Tembe and other Nguni people were discovered by Portuguese sailors along the coastal areas of Maputo and Natal according to the writings of Perestrello, as early as 1554, and a familiar name cited by Portuguese and Swiss Missionaries is “Zembe” (in reference to the Tembe area of settlement) (Junod 1912, p. 25).

Among many of the Nguni of northern KwaZulu-Natal and the Swati the “z” which is common among the Nguni tribes has been replaced by the “t” which is the influence of the Tsonga language. Mthethwa (1995) also points out that in some tribal divisions “z” is replaced by “t”. For this reason “Zembe” can be equivalent to “Tembe”, just as the Nguni word “*mazinyo*” is equivalent to the local Tsonga “*matinyo*” – “teeth”. This interesting perspective provides a clue to how major languages are influenced by other languages. So the similarities between the Nguni languages and the Xitsonga language have indeed existed for a very long time and it further shows how African languages progress with time.

Standardization of the Xitsonga Language

As mentioned earlier, the Xitsonga language is the result of various Tsonga dialects that were known and extensively researched by Swiss Missionaries during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The spelling and writing system of this language has taken a good deal from the languages and dialects known as

Xitswa, Xirhonga, Xitonga, Xihlanganu, Xidjonga, Xibila, Xin'walungu and Xihlengwe, among others. It would be inconsistent for different dialects to form part of the curriculum in a class lesson and there would be no way to determine progress on a subject if people wrote differently depending on how they speak the language, so standardization became a necessity with many languages of South Africa and other parts of Africa.

For those who intend to learn more about the standardization of Xitsonga and the history of codification amongst its speakers, it is important to know that there is a reliable historical perspective that shows the approach taken to the integration of Xitswa, Xirhonga, and Xitonga:

68. Henri-Philippe Junod, Henri Junod, 20. See also the correspondence between G.P.Lestrade and the Swiss Mission on the orthographic and general linguistic unification of Tonga, Ronga and Tswa. University of Cape Town, MSS and Archives, Bc255, AI.84-AI.98.

(Image source: Harries 1987)

Without the observance of the rules of grammar and the regulation of speech and writing, we find that many will fall into the danger of breaking the rules of grammar when they speak. For example many people break the following rules when they speak: “*ni ri wexe*” – instead of “*ni ri nexe*”; “*hina hinkwenu*” – instead of “*hina hinkweru*”; “*ku nga ri hava ndlela*” – instead of “*ku ri hava ndlela*”; people are regularly ruining their language and ignoring it. Grammatical standardization is able to protect these speakers from violations of the rules of their language. As with *standardization* and *standardisation* (in both American and British English spelling) it meant that there had to be a standard way of writing in South African Xitsonga and this caused many other dialects in Africa in general to be grouped under a common learning system for the sake of literacy. Languages were

standardized to belong to a monolingual field in the field of learning for the purpose of reading and writing.

Many church missionaries and linguists from Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and Portugal were involved in standardizing the various languages throughout South Africa and, like many of the Xitsonga dialects, the missionaries took these dialects as part of a single group. They eventually refused to separate the Tsonga dialects and instead grouped them under the Tonga Language System which was later registered as “Xitsonga” and today falling within the Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996). The language was declared one of the official languages of South Africa, which formed the basis for its development as a mother tongue. During the Apartheid era the development of the Xitsonga language was managed by the Xitsonga Language Board under the Department of Education or Bantu Education.

In modern times the development of Xitsonga is guided by the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and within the National Xitsonga Language Board. Another body tasked with overseeing the development of Xitsonga as a standardized language and participating in the production of a dictionary is the Xitsonga National Lexicography Unit.

Efforts to standardize language have allowed Xitsonga to be used as part of the public school curriculum in South Africa. Today school children can learn the Xitsonga language and have the option to continue its education even in higher education institutions. There are indeed some differences between the written form and the spoken form of Xitsonga, like many other languages (Marivate 1985). For example, in the written form it is common to write “*ndzi vulavula Xitsonga*”; while in the spoken form it is usually “*Ni vulavula Xitsonga*”. Another example of difference is the pronunciation of words, such as “*Ku vulavula*” where most speakers in the Limpopo province would say “*Ku valavula*”. In Xitsonga literary terms “*Vala-*” does not have any meaning; therefore the correct root word is “*Vula-*” (say). It seems that the

standardization of Xitsonga in recent years has played an important role in enabling the Tsonga to adopt a common language. By promoting literacy in the Xitsonga language, the Tsonga are able to preserve their language for future generations, and radio and even television and print media are one of the main ways to promote this development.

HISTORIC IDENTITY

The Vatsonga are an ethnic group made up of historically dispersed, independent clans around the south-eastern part of Africa. The Vatsonga in South Africa also comprise of a mixed heritage of identities. They descend from either one or a combination of Tonga, Copi, Tswa, Kalanga, Rhonga, Ndaou, Nguni, Mbayi and/or Sotho, with most having a direct link to other ancestral groups in countries such as Malawi, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, or Swaziland respectively. The origin of the word "Tsonga" can be said to have been highly influenced by the pre-history of the Xitswa, Xitsonga, and Xirhonga-speaking groups, which can be said to be the oldest and most widely spoken languages of the Xitsonga language group.



(Image source: A 1505-1760 map showing the earlier Tsonga kingdoms in southern Mozambique (Hall 1909))

In the years during the 1600s to late 1800s some of the Tsonga people who lived in the eastern part of the now Limpopo province had referred to themselves as Vatonga (Ba-Tonga in old maps) and their land as '*vutonga*' (Berthoud 1884). Government records of 1935 also recorded the old traditional leaders of the present Tsonga people in modern-day Limpopo province as the 'Tonga' before the establishment of the Gazankulu Bantustan (Van Warmelo 1935). The term was later refined to include an 's' in accordance with the Hlengwe dialect of Xitswa, which equates to the same dialectic shift as with the Vatswa who were often referred to as the 'Vatshwa' and even 'Vatwa/Vatua' where the 's' is omitted. Junod (1912, p. 15) wrote that "the Thonga of the Northern Clans, especially those of the Bilen and Djonga groups, like to call themselves Tjonga, the Hlengwe Tsonga. This word is perhaps originally the same as Ronga and may have meant also people of the East, although the R of the Ronga dialect does not permute regularly in Tj and Ts in the Northern clans".

According to Erasmus (1995) early tribes of the Vatsonga were already in the Mozambique area and around the Kruger National Park by 697A.D.



(Image Source: Junod 1913)

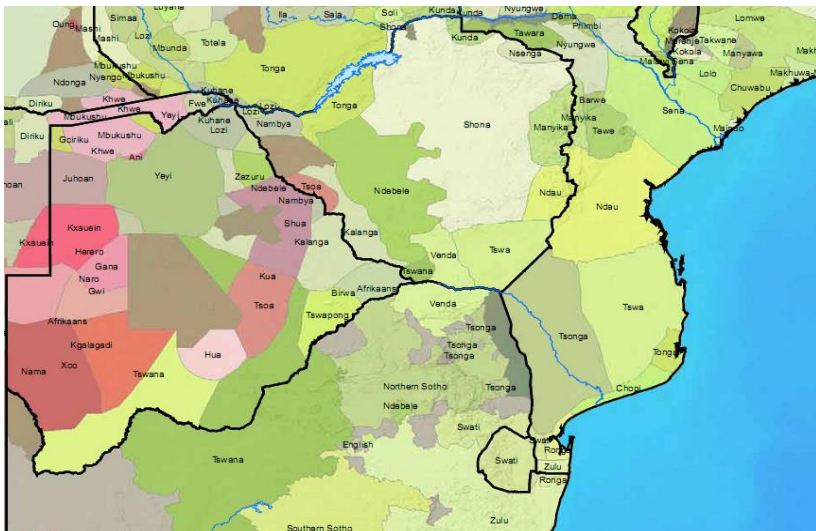
Where the development of the language is concerned, the lexical encoding system of Xitsonga comprises of that of Xihlanganu, Xin'walungu, Xibila, Xihlengwe, Xirhongo, Xitswa, and Xidzonga (Junod 1912; Junod 1913). These are very old dialects, and as is shown throughout this paper, many of which were already spoken by the first groups of the Tsonga people even before the 1500s. Xin'walungu and Xibila, for example, arose from Xitswa and the Chopi related dialects such as Xilenge. What is referred to as Xitonga or the Tonga language in many parts of this book refers to Xitsonga itself, as it was previously written as 'Tonga' and 'Gwamba' in old missionary work of the Spelonken, which encompasses the very same dialects mentioned above.

For reading and writing purposes the languages and dialects were grouped under the Tswa-Rhonga learning system, which was eventually standardised as 'Xitsonga'. The names of the great forefathers of old are one of the primary indications of the Xitsonga language having very deep historical roots. The language in Zimbabwe recognised as Shangani, according to Huffman (2016) is actually a more modern form of Xitswa.

The Tonga language of Malawi constitutes a distinct language, as well as the Chitonga language of Malawi which belongs to the Mhanda group. It would however necessitate further research to ascertain if there is any historical relationship between the Mhanda group of Chitonga in Malawi and the Mhandla group of the Vilankulu who today speak Xitswa and Xitsonga. Despite many similarities in terminology it has been established that other groups who use the name Tonga in parts of Africa have a distinct culture and language from modern groups of the Tsonga. Hall (1909, p. 391-392) describes groups of the Tonga in the central parts of Mozambique as a war-like people who were more similar to the Tsonga and Zulu in appearance than the Karanga.

The Bi-Tonga of Inhambane form part of an ancient group of the south-eastern Tonga who are related to the Chopi but who were highly affected by Arab and Portuguese culture. While many of the distinct Batonga groups of

Zambia and Zimbabwe were mostly constituted by matrilineal elements, other groups also known as Tonga such as the Bi-Tonga or Vakhokha (meaning those who lived in large *Tikhokholo* stockaded settlements), who live in southern Mozambique were constituted by patrilineal elements as with their nearest relatives the Chopi, which makes them more similar to the Tsonga than other Tonga groups of Africa. An early work of Henri Junod (1905, p. 224) mentions them as “the Tsonga of Inhambane”.



(Image Source: Steve Huffman 2016)

Xitsonga as a modern African language has its standardization in South Africa, while the base ancestral Xitswa and Xironga languages have their own rules of standardization as determined by the early missionary work as well as modern lexicography units. The Vatsonga themselves originate from various points of the compass, much like with other people groups in

southern Africa and throughout the world, but most of the oral history and documented research concerning the various clans, as indicated further on, point towards the north of Africa and the Great Lakes as the primary departure point prior to the migrations south towards Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

The Vatsonga share a cultural and linguistic unity despite there being various independent clans, although kinship ties are often subject to much debate. The Vatsonga people are related beyond the level of individual clan identity and the most tribal separations within Tsonga royal houses is often attributable to an ancient Tsonga custom that required a Tsonga prince to leave his father's kingdom in order to lead his own (this custom directly or indirectly served to protect the royal lineage from hostile invasions). A Tsonga child always belongs to the father's lineage in Tsonga customs, and when the young princes formed their own kingdoms they often named these tribes after themselves, which subsequently made it appear to outsiders as though the people shared no unity and no strong authoritative structure. It was an old way of living for many African groups. Various tribal sections of the Vatsonga were easily raided by invading forces that did not have a hard time defeating such tribes due to their independence and lack of centrality. These customs however largely secured Tsonga authority for centuries; hence many tribal authorities have retained their authority and recognition as senior traditional leaders to this day in different countries.

In a historical analysis, not all groups under a particular clan should be taken to have migrated to an area all at the same time. Where references are made to point to a particular migration of a clan, it is likely such a migration was not as structured and encompassing as it may appear. Clans also had subjects from other nearby clans under them, which indicates that a particular migration history of one clan could have brought different groups into an area of interest along with it.

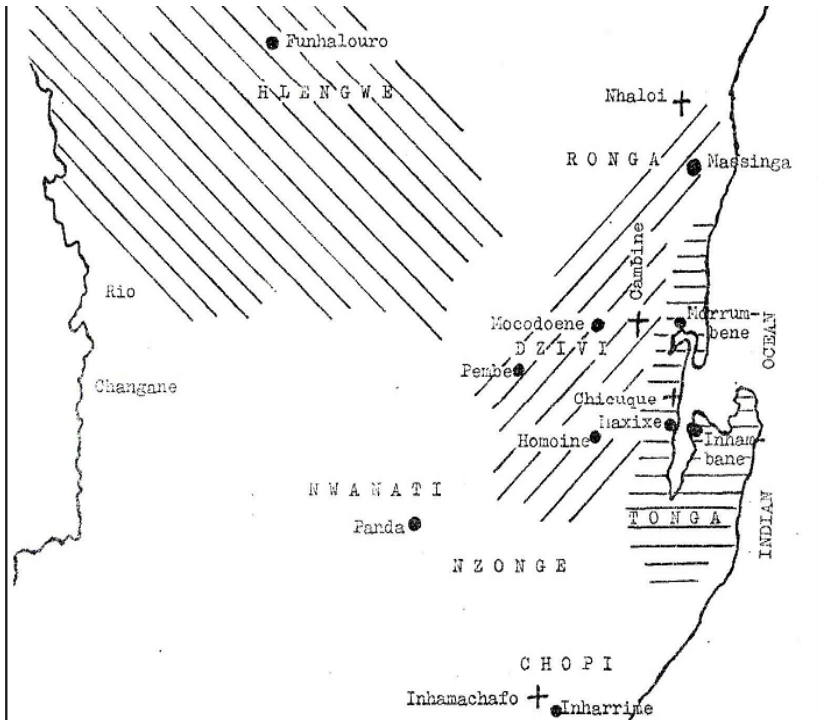
Vatsonga tribes in Mozambique, on the dawn of their arrival, lived relatively stable lives and commonly trading with other groups and fighting amongst themselves, farming, fishing, and herding cattle. Vatsonga had in the 1600s to the early 1800s established some of the most powerful trading kingdoms in southern Africa, even establishing trade organisations (sometimes described as trade “companies”) along the Mozambican coast (Junod 1913, p. 127; Lawton 1967). The Vatsonga who were living in southern Mozambique in the 1820s were raided by the Ngoni soldiers who ran away from Shaka Zulu's war in Zululand. Many of the conquered tribes became part of the Gaza Lineage State (not to be confused with the Gazankulu Homeland or Gaza in Palestine). Many of the Vatsonga fled to the Transvaal and Northern Province of South Africa during this time, and most of them settled with Tsonga clans that had already been living in these areas before the Zulu wars started. The Vatsonga had been living in these decentralised societies well over “three hundred years before Soshangane was born” (Mathebula *et al.* 2007, p. 34). Invasions into Tsonga-dominated areas of the coast were sporadic and less widespread before the *Mfecane* era, with an invasion by the Karanga from the mid-1500s and later during the 1700s-1800s groups of the Nyai, Hlubi, Mbayi, and early Nguni had certainly made their way into the area as either invading forces or hunters and travellers seeking greener pastures. All groups are acknowledged as having played a significant role in subsequent state formations and cultural structuring (Liesegang 2014a).

There were four main migrations of the Vatsonga from Mozambique into modern-day South Africa. The earliest traces of the ancient Tonga in Mozambique appear to be visible from around 600AD-800AD (Hall 1909; Maluleke 2021). Their initial settlements from southern Mozambique into South Africa may have occurred between 800AD to around 1650 when the Vatsonga dominated the South-East trade (Maluleke 2021).

The second great migration occurred during the last *Mfecane* (Nguni wars and scatterings) after the Ndwandwe group invaded southern Mozambique during the 1820s. During these migrations a lot of the Vatsonga fled Mozambique, with sections of the Maluleke and some of the Hlengwe who were based near the Limpopo River reversing into areas of the now Kruger National Park and stretching inland towards today's Malamulele and the Zoutpansberg region from 1834 to 1836. Other groups of the Maluleke remained near the Limpopo on the Mozambican side, and the Hlengwe remained in Hlengweni while groups of the Mavunda, Nkuna and Valoyi headed towards the Pedi and Lobedu dominated areas in the period between 1836-1840. All of these groups, regardless of their origin, were at one point classified as the "Gwamba", "Koapa", "Makhwapa", or "knob noses" after their arrival in the north of South Africa (Berthoud 1896; Liesegang 2014a).

The third migrations occurred during a succession struggle between two of Soshangane's sons, Mawewe and Mzila in the 1860s. In these migrations, many of those who fled Mozambique settled under the leadership of the Mukhari, and some under the leadership of the native commissioner João Albasini, while others settled in Malamulele. In 1862 and later on, some of the Ndau whose land was taken by Mzila and his people, relocated to other areas with many of them heading north and some settling among the Chopi/Vacopi below Inhambane.

The fourth migrations occurred after the defeat and disintegration of the Gaza State by the Portuguese and Vacopi after 1890. Some of those who fled during the fourth migrations after 1890 settled mostly around Bushbuckridge and formed under the Amashangane Tribal Authority and others integrated into the first groups of settlers in the Limpopo. Smaller-scale migrations occurred later on during the Mozambican War of Independence and shortly after the Mozambican Civil War which was also part of the Cold War.



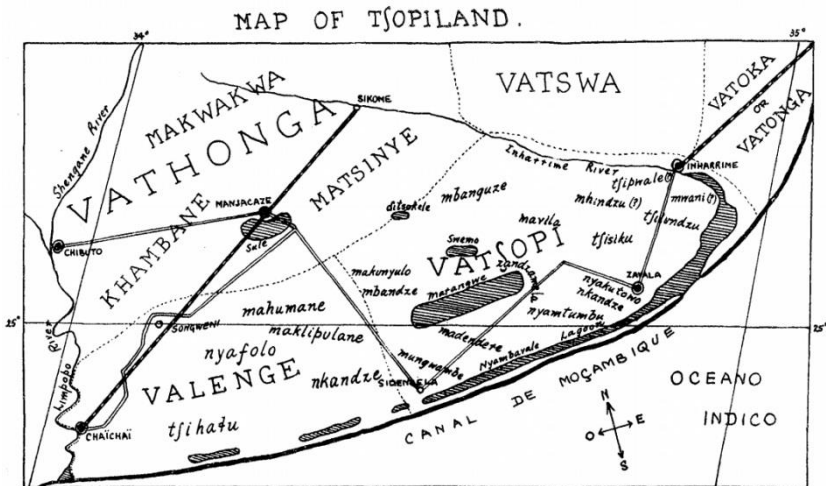
(Image: Early 1900s settlement areas of the Vatsonga and others in southern Mozambique by Helgesson (1971))

The Vacopi

Vacopi/Chopi ("the archers" or "those who shoot with a bow and arrow") are expert craftsmen and they are masters at assembling and using the bow and arrow – a weapon used during earlier times for hunting and protection. Vacopi came to inherit the name from their efficient use of the bow and arrow (Van'wanati Clan 2015a); the name "Vacopi" became famous after it was popularised by the Xitsonga-speaking followers of Nghunghunyani. There is a group of the Vacopi known as Vandonge/Vandhonga and another section of them known as Valenge/Valengue. Today there are more than 14 chiefdoms of the Vacopi from the house of Bingwane Mondlane alone and even more from other lineages in southern Mozambique. The Vacopi comprise of independent traditional authorities although forming part of a nation through similar traditional practices and language. They are a very industrious group and were identified by Junod (1913, p. 249) as "the best musicians" in Mozambique. Velez Grilo (1958, p. 113) links them in sharing some migration history with the Sena groups of the Valembe and Tonga of southern Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Van'wanati amongst the Vacopi of the 1800s were also some of the most powerful forces in the Tsonga country and they defended their people with might against the Ngoni invaders on many occasions. In 1897 a southern group of the Vacopi were led by the Xipenenyana and Xivambu (Nkome) royal houses which are amongst the many Van'wanati sub-sections. They used an ancient mix of poison on their arrows, which made their attacks very deadly and very efficient – a tactic the Vatembe were also known for. One of the most notable instances of aggression from the Vacopi occurred after Nghunghunyane attacked and killed their leader, Bingwani of the Mondlane, where the Vacopi under the leadership of his son Xipenenyana amassed a large army and stormed into Nghunghunyane's new installation at Manjakazi that had been the governing seat of the Mondlanes before the

Gaza-Nguni arrival. At roughly the same time of Bingwana's death, Nghunghunyana also killed one of the Valenge chiefs known as Makupulani and mixed his spinal cord with herbal medicine for his warriors to drink. Makupulani was one of the head chiefs from the Langa lineage who were assimilated into the Lenge culture and language in the 1700s before the *Mfecane* of the early 1800s. Makupulani was the son of Tlandlala, Tlandlala the son of Mpfhotho, Mpfhotho the son of Ngunze, Ngunze the son of Langa of the Bahule clan, Langa the son of Siva, Siva the son of Zwithi (Junod 1927, p. 69-70). The Bahule/Langa clan had defeated Nghunghunyani's warriors in previous battles and became well known as part of the Vacopi as they also used bows and arrows to fight against the Gaza Nguni (Maluleke 2021). Other Vacopi in southern Mozambique are the Gwambe of Valoyi, the Vilankulu, the Tembe of Matsinye, and the various groups of the Thovele who are related to the Lobedu and Venda people of South Africa.

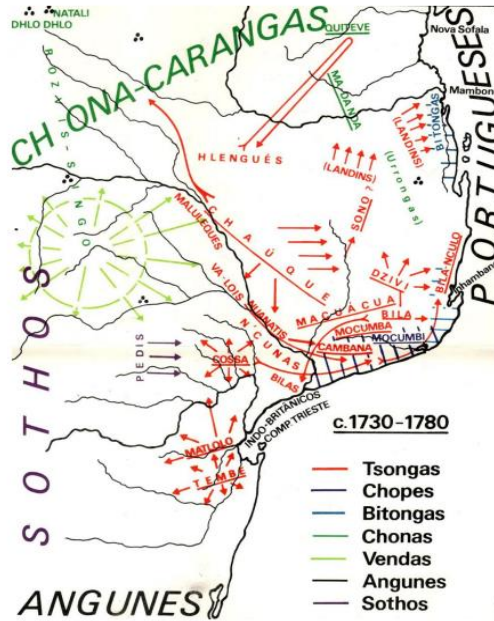


(Image source: Junod 1927)

Vatsonga Clans

The Vatsonga are a group of clans that today share a common heritage and are united by language and culture as defined in the Constitution of South Africa. Their grouping is similar to the Vhavenda who are also formed by a set of tribes or clans with distinct origins who came to be united through the South African Venda language. The designations of Tsonga clans according to geographic location were primarily used to identify the variations in dialect when the Vatsonga social life was being studied in the 1900s (Junod 1912); however many clans take their name from an ancestor or a great river or land of settlement. The N'wanati for example, share their name with an area of the N'wanati which also was the name of the great river north of the Limpopo which flows into the Indian ocean, and the name was given to their forefather Gunyule who was also known as N'wanati; then there is the Vankomati who go by the name of the Nkomati River and region; and the Vaxingwedzi who share their name with the Shingwedzi River. The people of Bila and Bilankulu have their geographic regions in Vilankulu and Bileni in Mozambique, which are also dynastic titles and the name of a type of reddish soil. The Ronga identify with the geographic region east and their language is known as Xirhonga.

Figura 1: Carta geográfica das migrações proto-tsongas no Sul de Moçambique



Fonte: Rita-Ferreira (1982)

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(Image: Rita-Ferreira (1982) indicates the presence of Tsonga groups and others in what is today South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe in the period 1730-1780. Among the Tsonga groups indicated are the Tembe, Khosa ("Cossa"), Valoyi ("Va-Lois"), Maluleke ("Maluleques"), Vahlengwe ("Hlengues"), Sono, Vankuna ("Ncunas"), Makwakwa (Macuacua), Bila, Khambana ("Cambana"), etc.

The Vatsonga in southern Africa identify with the following groups or clan names:

VaBila
VaDzonga
VaHlanganu
VaHlave
VaHlengwe
VaKhosa
VaLambya
VaLoyi
VaN'wanati
VaNdzawu
VaNkomati
VaNkuna
VaRhonga
VaShangane
VaTembe
VaTswa

VaXika
VaXingwedzi

Distribution

In Mozambique, Xitsonga speakers numbered about 1 379 045 people in 1997 (INDE 1997). The Vatsonga communities living around the rural communities of Limpopo in the areas of Giyani, Malumulele, Hlanganani, Ritavi 1, Ritavi 2, Lulekani, and Mhala numbered about 700 000 people in 2015 (Encyclopedia of World Cultures Supplement 2016). Cited from Zerbian (2007), it is shown that in South Africa as a whole there was a total of about 1 992 207 Xitsonga speakers who were counted in 2004 according to statistical estimations (Statistics South Africa 2004). According to more recent numbers by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), Xitsonga-speaking people in South Africa alone by the year 2018 numbered about 2.3 million people.

Major Conflicts

The most widespread of conflicts in which the Vatsonga have been involved in were with the Arabs, the Portuguese, the Gaza State, and the Boers. The Portuguese and Arabs had at certain points in time engaged in direct conflicts with the Tsonga people of Mozambique. For instance a Portuguese governor of Inhambane, Iztir Carrazedo, is known to have made two

expeditions against Dzovo of the Mondlanes and his group of the Vacopi (Liesegang 2014b).

The Dutch Afrikaners also fought Tsonga groups in South African territory in the 1800s, and in many instances the Vatsonga came out victorious in battle. There were many conflicts involving the Vatsonga with groups of the Karanga/Shona and early Venda-speaking communities in the early period between the years 1500-1700, and also internally among themselves on different occasions. Battles between the Vatsonga and Vhavenda in the Limpopo Province were seen in the early 1700s to late 1800s.

In the recent 200 years of history Vatsonga tribes were also raided by Nguni invaders under the leadership of Manukuza/Manukuse (also named Soshangane) Nxumalo of the Amashangane tribe, who engaged in large-scale conflicts in the areas within southern Mozambique, Eastern Zimbabwe, and parts of Musapa (Junod 1912). Soshangane and his allies, after suffering defeat at the hands of Shaka Zulu during the last *Mfecane*, were bound and convicted to eventually direct their efforts to conquer and assimilate into many of the Varhonga, Vabila, Vahlengwe, Vadzonga, and Vandzawu clans, as well as other smaller tribes such as the Manyika, Vahlave Mavunda of Zivuko, and Ngoveni of Xibotana, in Mozambique and Zimbabwe respectively (Junod 1912). The Gaza Kingdom, established by Soshangane in southern Mozambique, was a result of this conquest. Soshangane's State was however at times defeated by more militarily-able Vatsonga clans such as the Vatembe, Vacopi, Valenge, Van'wanati, Vankuna, and Valoyi, as well as the Varhonga tribes of Nondwane of Mpfumo who were settled along the strategic coast of Lourenco Marques (present-day Maputo Bay) in Mozambique. The Tonga people of Inhambane (Vakhokha) also resisted Gaza hegemony throughout the period of its dominance although they did face constant raids. The Vacopi in their majority resisted until the period of Ngunghunyane. Groups with prior Nguni history of affiliation and the Ndaus seem to have succumbed earlier than most of the others.

The Gazankulu Year Book and Diary (1983) points out that Van'wanati, Vankuna, Valoyi, the house of Bungeni, Gonono (N'wamitwa and Makhada), Mukhari, many of the Mavunda, and many others of the Vatsonga who migrated from Mozambique to Limpopo during the raids of Soshangane and other Nguni groups such as those of Nxaba and Zwangendaba, were already in South Africa long before the arrival of the Gaza-Nguni in Mozambique (Malungana 1994; Gazankulu 1983), and have never really played a useful role towards the founding of the Gaza Kingdom, often criticising and fighting against its hegemony. According to historical analysis, swathes of tribes refused to be subjects of Soshangane and a few others still based in Mozambique displayed strong resistance throughout the 71 year period. For example the Tonga (Bi-Tonga) and Copi (Chopi) communities along the Mozambican coast always remained allied to the Portuguese and they were also part of the armies that aided the Portuguese in fighting the Gaza-Nguni kingdom. The Vacopi were attacked on a number of occasions and some of them even captured as prisoners of war (POW) but they were actually never subjugated under Soshangane's kingdom. In support of this history, Junod (1927, p. 1) points out that the Chopi people have never really been defeated by the invading forces, stating that during the wars of Nghunghunyane, the Chopi people resisted as much as possible and that "they were still using their national weapon with poisoned arrows, and in their strong blockhouses, resisted a long time, before being compelled to flee by the great number of their assailants. As a matter of fact, they were never really defeated, but, outnumbered, were bound to withdraw further east and north".

In the last period of Nghunghunyani in Mozambique the resistance was still fierce under Xipenenyani the son of Mbingwani/Bingwana, a powerful chief in that region and highly regarded in Mozambique for their opposition to the Gaza-Nguni (Cruz 2022, p. 9). Today the Chopi people still retain chieftaincies as *Régulos* (traditional leaders) in their old places in those parts

of Mozambique, such as in the regions of Inharrime, Manjakazi, Khambane, Makwakwa, Nkumbe, Zavala, Inhambane and towards Xai-Xai, with the Vacopi today largely being encompassed by lineages of different backgrounds.

The Tembe Kingdom had received recognition as Amatongaland (also known as Tembeland) by Britain and was registered as a protectorate of the British government in 1896. It was also briefly allied to the Portuguese during the earlier times of trade and they also engaged in regimental support in alliance with the Mthethwa and other Nguni polities with whom they interacted with in trade prior to the *Mfecane* wars (Kloppers 2003, p. 40). Fearing a Portuguese and Afrikaner stronghold on these areas, the southern part of Tembeland was annexed by Britain and incorporated into Zululand in 1897, and the junior branch of the Tembe under Ngwanase fell under the influence of the Zulu kingdom as the territory was also demarcated into British-controlled South Africa.

The Vatsonga inland within the Transvaal, such as the Van'wanati, Valoyi, Vahlanganu, and Vankuna, some of whom were attacked and forced to flee from Mozambique, largely distanced themselves from the conflicts of 1820-1897 and were also never really conquered or subjugated but re-established their independence in much the same way that Soshangane re-established his independence from the reign of Shaka Zulu and the Zulu Kingdom. Royal houses such as the Mukhari, Mhinga, Xikundu, Nkuri, Nkuna, N'wamitwa and many others were not incorporated into the Gaza-Nguni and successfully avoided brutal attacks after the South African territorial borders were drawn up after the official establishment of the South African Republic in 1852.

At the heart of the matter is that the Gaza Kingdom did in fact defeat a lot of the smaller tribes in Mozambique and other parts of Zimbabwe, and many were subjugated for taxation and resources such as cattle, iron, and ivory, and to supply manpower for regimental duties; it became a large and

powerful establishment at the height of its power towards the late 1800s. However large groups did remain resistant and rebellious to the establishment and this, together with its own internal conflicts within the kingdom itself, without a doubt led to the eventual downfall of the Gaza Kingdom in the 1890s. Thus many who were in fact subjugated also re-established their independence outside of the failed kingdom and many settled amongst those who had not been subjects. The assimilation of these tribes did create a lot of confusion in terms of affiliation and for this reason today many use the terms Vatsonga and Machangana interchangeably. The two terms (Tsonga and Shangaan or Vatsonga-Machangana), however, have often been used interchangeably to reduce tribalism and internal conflict. Witter (2010, p. 64) in view of the inaccuracy in cultural affiliation and traditional identity remarks that “Shangaan ethnic categorization somewhat inaccurately links the entirety of the region’s population to the Gaza Nguni ruler Soshangane and includes them as subjects of Gaza rule”. Witter gives the opinion that by referring to themselves as amaShangana or Changana the Vatsonga could be inadvertently subjecting themselves to the rulership of the descendants of Soshangane.

Others refuse the tribal identity of “machangana” altogether with respects to heritage and cultural values (Mathebula 2013), while some simply regard the Amashangane as but one amongst a group of many other Vatsonga clans. Malungana (1994, p. 58) points out the historic contrasts between the Amashangana and Vatsonga, stating that “strictly speaking, the name Machangana, which is sometimes used for the group, applies only to one tribe of Vatsonga which descended from Soshangana and his Vangoni followers, and other Vatsonga who claimed to be Vangoni”.

Given the long and complex history between the Tsonga and the Shangaan people, and that no historical evidence really exists to support the development of a “Shangaan language” outside of Xitsonga itself, confusion often mounts as to the cultural and linguistic contrasts between these two groups. Others seem to refer to “Shangaan” as one of the dialects of

Xitsonga (Anthony *et al.* 2011). The Shangaan tribe of the Ndwandwe in Limpopo mostly speaks Xitsonga as a first language, and some, especially in Mpumalanga around the Bushbuckridge area can also speak a Nguni second language. Many of them, whether in Mpumalanga, Swaziland, or Limpopo actually identify themselves as Tsonga-speaking in government statistics counts. Many of the Vatsonga in Limpopo today refer to themselves as "Machangani/Machangana", owing in part to the historic subjugation of many tribes and the popularity of the word. "Amashangane" was a popular word in South African mines and cities during the 1860s–1900s, usually as a derogatory word for "*ama shiya ingane*" (isiZulu for "those who left their children behind"). Some of the older Zulus have however usually been aware of the tribal identity of the Ndwandwe Shangaans. A contradiction usually transpires in those who have less knowledge on the history, where they will proudly call themselves "muchangani" in Limpopo but get offended when Zulus and Sothos call them "mushangane" in Gauteng for example, as many perceive "machangani" to be proper and "mashangane" to be improper, not knowing that "amaShangane" is the proper Nguni form of the name. In essence what transpired in South Africa is that the identity of all Tsonga-speaking people has subsequently been acquainted with the Ndwandwe Ngunis who broke away from the Zulus during the times of Shaka, which has been a big trend supported mostly by the lack of knowledge or academic interest in the prior history of the Tsonga people.

Some of the leading researchers and Vatsonga traditional leaders during 2006 – 2011, led an opposition against a claim by Eric Mpisane Nxumalo (descendant of Soshangane Nxumalo) to be recognised as a king of the Amashangana in South Africa (Sowetan Live 2012). Nxumalo's kingship claim, though it stated 'Amashangana' kingship claim, was rejected by a majority of the leading Vatsonga traditional leaders of South Africa, researchers, and by the Nhlapo Commission. The Amashangana kingship claim in summary disregarded the existence of a Tsonga identity and indiscriminately included all Xitsonga-speaking groups as part of

Amashangane, a notion rejected by the many. This claim was eventually dismissed in the High and Constitutional Court after it was determined that (1) the Gaza kingdom was a raiding Nguni establishment after long years of Tsonga history, and had the support of only a fraction of a larger Vatsonga nation; that (2) the Gaza kingdom had its kingdom and capitals based in Mozambique, which is separate from South Africa by territorial borders; and that (3) the Gaza kingdom ended when they were defeated by the Portuguese supported by factions of African tribes such as the Chopi, and that it further disintegrated when they signed a treaty with the Portuguese, leaving the Nxumalo clan to rule over a small portion of their followers as traditional authorities in Mpumalanga where they were accepted and incorporated by the locals. It was apparent that the Nxumalo claim for the restoration of the amaShangane kingship had failed to even consider that many of the traditional practices of the Nguni differ from those of the Tsonga and that the succession customs also do not follow the same principles. On the other hand, the umbrella term 'amaShangane' was seen in contradiction to the constitutional recognition of languages where Xitsonga as a language group uses 'Va-' as a prefix for their cultural affiliation instead of 'ama-' which constitutes a core element of the Nguni language group.

The relationship between the Vatsonga and Amashangane has always been a shaky one and the confusing dynamics created over the years has made it an academic challenge for some to understand the complexity of the history, especially to researchers who only consider history from a 200 years' perspective and have little understanding of cultural institutions. In the case of Mr Mpisane Eric Nxumalo versus The President of the Republic of South Africa [2012], The North Gauteng High Court assessed that a considerable number of the Vatsonga "refugees" who fled the Gaza conquests settled under the leadership of prior establishments in the Limpopo area long before the *Mfecane*, where the Vatsonga later had their capital based at Malamulele, while the others had settled under the Pedi

and Lobedu. More kingship claims with the groups of Mukhari, Maluleke, and Valoyi added on to the constrained quest for kingship restoration, though to this date none have managed to come out in success. The number of kingship claims among the Xitsonga-speaking tribes of South Africa (4 to this day) is sufficient enough to indicate that the people have for a long time lacked a clearly defined centre of traditional authority that encompasses all Xitsonga-speaking tribes and that they possess different views of kingship or “*vuhosinkulu*” in accordance with their lineage and traditional customs.

During the times of Apartheid governance, and in modern times, Vatsonga-Machangana even came to be used in double-barrel form in an attempt to reduce tribalism between the two. A great amount of independence for both the Vatsonga and amaShangane came after fierce resistance from *Hosi* Adolf Sunduza II Mhinga and other chiefs from 1958 to 1962 to have a separate homeland free from control by the Swati, Venda and Pedi people. Sunduza II led the withdrawal of the Tsonga chiefs from the Vembe Regional Authority and Sibasa Local Council in 1961, and they formed their own which was named Malamulele (“the rescuer”) and Sunduza II Mhinga earned the people’s respect as a paramount leader of the area (Mathebula 2013, p. 37). Leaders within the influence of other language groups soon withdrew from the other Bantustans and joined the Tsonga homeland that later came to be known as Gazankulu. In 1962 the Machangana Territorial Authority had previously been established by traditional leaders and *Hosi* Adolf Sunduza II Mhinga was elected as its first leader and chairman (Malungana 1994, p. 57). Hudson Ntsanwisi later assumed the role of Chief Minister in 1969 and “Machangana Territorial Authority” was abandoned and replaced by the Gazankulu homeland under a new Bantustan system during 1971-1974.

In contrast to the Gaza kingdom in Mozambique, the Gazankulu (“Greater Gaza”) Bantustan in South Africa was established through Apartheid laws and named in retrospect of the defunct status of the Gaza kingdom in Mozambique, and the two establishments had constituted separate political

and social units, however this did not stop the leaders from giving some recognition in the name “Gaza-” to the history of what they saw as one of the largest kingdoms to have emerged in southern Africa. The Gazankulu homeland under Hudson Ntsanwisi relatively allowed for greater autonomy for the Vatsonga, whereas the Gaza Kingdom had served to prioritise the Ndwandwe ruling lineage and their language and culture over their subjects. The efforts of the Gazankulu leadership did in fact create a period of regrowth and autonomy for both the Vatsonga and the Gaza-Nguni who today would have all been assimilated and dominated by nearby tribes.

In 1969 the Gazankulu homeland was granted semi-independence for its local chiefs and tribal communities, and the local activists and chiefs became the leading voices behind the promotion of Xitsonga as a celebrated heritage, culture, and as one of South Africa's official languages; however, the laws of racial segregation did still have a negative impact on the Xitsonga-speaking people and the development of their cultural institutions and proper language education, as with many other South African tribes who were under the forceful hand of the Apartheid regime.

Related Ethnic Groups

- BaNguni
- Basotho
- Vhashona
- Vhavenda
[...etc.]

Social and Cultural Life of the Tsonga People

Daily Cuisine:

The Vatsonga have age-old delicacies that they have maintained to this day. The Vatsonga share similar cuisine to other African people and they have also incorporated the delicacies of other cultures. They mostly feed on maize meal ("*vuswa*") on a regular basis, which they believe is vital for satisfying the hunger of an African, together with vegetables, meat, or a combination of both. There is a wide range of traditional methods on the preparation of food, some of which are complicated and deserving of their own discussion outside the scope of this analysis and history. Cassava, fish, ground termites, Mopani worms, and grasshoppers form some of the older delicacies favoured mostly by the older generation.

Imports of some fruits and vegetables such as lemon, oranges, coconut, and sugarcane, as well as rice and herbs such as cannabis sativa, all came in through trade with Persians at the coast of Inhambane (Rita-Ferreira 1959, p. 58). These became part of the Tsonga people's means of trade and they brought much of these into the interior.

Traditional Drinks:

The marula fruit (*vukanyji*) is an old African indigenous fruit often used for making traditional beer. The marula fruit can be quite intoxicating when prepared correctly and left for a few days to brew. From as far back as they can remember, the Vatsonga have been using this fruit to prepare African beer for themselves when it is harvesting season, and they have come to

have shared one of these experiences with other outsiders who came to appreciate the social life of the Vatsonga (Junod 1913).

Vuhimbi, from the *mpimbi* tree, is another age-old Tsonga drink that is also quite intoxicating. The fruit is sweet and is harvested during December. Junod (1913), a Swiss Missionary, found the beverage produced by the Vatsonga to be very alcoholic while the fruit itself is much more pleasant to consume, and he compared it to an apricot.

The palm tree ("*mulala*") is a highly favoured tree amongst the Vatsonga. The Vatsonga have been grooming palm trees for centuries and they have been historically attracted to the tree for decorative purposes in their yards. Junod (1913) was surprised by the number of palm trees grown by Vatsonga clans such as the Maluleke and Vahlengwe. As surprisingly as it may seem to some, it is also used to make wine by the Vatsonga.

Another traditional drink that the Tsonga people often make is called *madleke*. This is usually a non-alcoholic drink and often accompanies the beer at functions for those who do not drink intoxicating substances.

Traditional Herbs:

The Vatsonga use different kinds of herbs for healing, recreational use, and for making products. Herbal use by the Vatsonga and other southern-African tribes pre-dates the introduction of modern medicines, as self-produced herbs are generally trusted over modern pharmaceutical products, mostly by the older generation.

Luseba and Van der Merwe (2006) conducted a study on the Vatsonga of South Africa and found that plants are favoured over other, non-conventional medicines. "They even treat their livestock!" – the researchers assert. They report on how the Vatsonga do not use a particular storage system for their plants, which are harvested from the wild and are manually

processed to be used for treating diseases, for clearing bacteria, and for grooming their livestock. Traditional methods of storage always formed part of the people's way of life, with the *dulu* storage hut being preferred for storing maize and other harvestings.

Traditional Clothing:

The Vatsonga usually wear traditional clothing of the Xitsonga culture during events, traditional ceremonies, and on casual outings. Most of the older generation (women) tend to wear traditional Xitsonga clothing and the *tinguvu* on a full-time basis. Xitsonga traditional clothing has remained consistent for many years and has developed more modern fashions that have been highly popularised by the younger generation. The fashion of "colour-blocking", as it has come to be known in South Africa, is adopted from the bright, eccentric feel of the Xitsonga clothing. *Minceka*, the Xitsonga-patterned silky textures are highly favoured among the older generation, while the younger generation will tend to prefer more modern fashions while retaining the traditional patterns and the usual fabric and textiles. The *tinguvu* (better known as *xibelani*) were woven locally in line with old traditional sewing methods while the fabric has been imported from Asian traders ever since the arrival of Semitic and Austranasian groups in Mozambique from around 800 AD to 1600 AD.

The Tsonga men have historically been animal-skin lovers. They mostly used animal hide to keep themselves warm and to make protective clothing for the sensitive parts of their bodies. When some in South Africa think of animal hide, such as leopard skin etc. they usually think of these as "of Zulu origin", but in actuality, Africans have been using these types of animal skin for protection from wild animals for many centuries; for even more than a thousand years before the existence of the Zulu kingdom; way into pre-historic times. To the Zulus, leopard print was favoured by the royal families

as a sign of authority and brevity as the leopard loves to live alone and attacks its prey fearlessly. The Leopard's Culture or Leopard's Kopje (as known in Mapungubwe historical literature) of Namibia, Botswana and parts of Zimbabwe took much pride in adorning themselves in animal skins to protect themselves against predators since the wild animals would be less likely to attack them when they look and smell like them. The ethical implications of wearing animal skins have been considered on many occasions in modern society and many African groups now replace animal skins with synthetic ones.

Later on after the arrival of Swiss Missionaries the Tsonga men were more accepting of the modern casual wear of pants, shirts, and jackets; however the older women have still largely retained their traditional *tinguvu* and *minceka* on a day-to-day basis, which gives credit to the Tsonga women on being the main source of preservation of the more traditional Xitsonga traditional wear.

Today the men will tend to wear their old traditional animal skins (*tinjhovo/madzovo*) on special occasions or traditional performances such as the *Makhwaya*, *Xincayincayi* or *Swigubu*, and *Muchongolo*. During such traditional occasions or events the Tsonga men also wear traditional waist-bounded attire collectively known as "*swigejo*" which come in different forms and colour combinations. Traditional performances of *Swigubu* are prevalent in the rural communities of Limpopo and are one vital source of inspiration for preserving Tsonga traditional dance for the men.

On the bicep part of both arms and on the calves of their legs the Tsonga men tie the hairs of a white ox tail, and sometimes will insert ostrich feathers on both biceps.

The *nsimba* which is the skin of a civet cat was originally a symbol of the traditional councils and was tied like a belt (its legs) around the waist but the importance is for the body part of the skin to be left hanging in the front part of the man's lower half between his thighs. To conceal the back part of

his lower half the man would tie the skin of an antelope or other favoured animal, with the whole thing known as *tinjhovo*. On rare occasions, particularly during the winter season, the men would cover their chest with ox hide.

The Tsonga men in older times even wore a traditional type of headwrap made in animal skin and decorated with feathers or porcupine quills. Some Tsonga groups even wore a type of headring or wax-crown known as a *xidlodlo* which came to be a symbol of the elderly in marriage and particularly the traditional leaders and members of the royal council.

In old days Tsonga traditional leaders who had passed away were buried wrapped up in thick ox hide.

Music:

The distinct sound of Xitsonga traditional music is distinguishable from the more mainstream traditional sound of modern times and in historical terms is more traceable to the early music of the Vacopi people and the African drumming of the Vandzawu and Varhonga tribes who practiced ancestral worship and performed traditional ceremonies. Vatsonga in the past danced to *timbila* and *swigubhu*; they still do to this day. In the past, Vatsonga made their music from African drums, the *timbila* (xylophone), wind pipes, horns (*timhahamhala*) and strings.

The Vacopi are famous for constructing and playing the *timbila* (a xylophone played in large groups). This music has been proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by the United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2005. The Vacopi are musically renowned as master craftsmen and skilled xylophone and marimba players. In the 1900s they were regarded as “the best musicians” in Mozambique (Junod 1913, p. 249). Today they are still known

to engage in the *timbila* music and like with the Vatsonga they use a call-and-response method in their singing, called “*mzenu*”. Their attire resembles much of that worn by the Tsonga men and women who perform the *xincayincayi* (chayi-chayi), the typical *swigejo* male attire, leg and arm tussels, and animal skins and the feathers of a large bird like an ostrich is much favoured by both groups.

African drumming also plays a big role in Tsonga traditional music. Drums such as *tincomana* were revered for their mystical powers during ceremonies and passage rites. The Ndzawu people were very active in traditional drumming and other instruments such as the Kalimba (a small thumb piano). Other drums such as the *mindzhumbha* and *tingoma* have made the Tsonga people a more musically oriented nation as these drums are still highly favoured to this day. All instruments developed and used by the Vatsonga are a common feature amongst African tribes but there is a unique element to the way the Vatsonga play and dance to their music, as can be seen and heard from their more mainstream traditional sound that incorporates many elements of the older music style. The music is sung in the Xitsonga language or one of its related dialects.

Today, the more progressive Tsonga Disco (or Xitsonga folk music), or the type referred to as Shangaan Disco, is the music that has largely developed out of the traditional form of music in South Africa. Xitsonga mainstream folk developed from African drumming, *timbila*, Tsonga footwork (*makhwaya*), and even the *xibelani* or *mukhinyavezo* dances introduced by the Tsonga women. The music later on, during the 1900s incorporated modern elements such as the electric guitars, piano, and synths, adding a more progressive, modern feel to the music. The Vatsonga were during the late 1900s influenced to some extent by electronic music instruments such as the common electric solo and bass guitars that they eventually came to incorporate electronic play in their music, which culminated in added complexity in what later came to be known as Tsonga Disco/Folk, and Xitsonga traditional.

Tsonga traditional music on the mainstream is usually produced at an average tempo of around 130BPM, or lower at around 110BPM, while more modern sub-genres often range from 160BPM to around 180BPM – considered quite fast in musical terms. Tsonga Disco/folk, Tsonga Electro, and the township style *Ndzhumbha* are what the Vatsonga of South Africa today consider as their primary traditional/mainstream music. This music is played mostly by the Tsonga people of South Africa, but it has found liking across Mozambique, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and even in Europe. It is a music genre of which the Vatsonga are specialists in. Over the years, Tsonga traditional music has developed into five noticeable sub-genres, including the following: Tsonga Disco, Tsonga Nu-Disco, Tsonga Electro, *Ndzhumbha*, Tsonga Dancehall, and Tsonga Afro-Pop and RnB, as summarized below:

- Tsonga Disco (Xitsonga Traditional Folk, e.g., MD Shirinda, Matshwa Bemuda, Peta Teanet, Penny Penny, Thomas Chauke, Paul Ndlovu, George Maluleke, General Muzka): Mostly played using live instruments, electric guitars, bass guitars, flutes, clavinetts, and subtle synths. It is a very dominant genre in the Limpopo province and Mozambique. A few modern artists have aspired towards this type of sound with much success. Tsonga Disco is the precursor to the modern sub-genres. It can go as low as 70BPM and forms the framework on which the latest sound is composed; and has its conception stemming from the use of live instruments. It is very possible and often more rewarding to grow one's talent in this genre by using live or MIDI instruments.
- Tsonga Traditional/Nu-Disco (Xitsonga Traditional Folk emphasising Dance, Brass and Orchestra, e.g., Thomas Chauke, Peter Hlungwani, Florah N'wa Chauke, Sunglen Chabalala, George Maluleke, Evans Mabasa, Snombhelani Sisters, Eckson Maluleke, Khavisa): This genre is what the Vatsonga of Limpopo mostly dance to. It is usually played at around 80BPM and 160BPM to 174 BPM. This is

the Xitsonga music that the Vatsonga people regard as keeping to the roots of Tsonga traditional music as played by the great legends. It is a direct reboot of the Xitsonga Disco that the likes of Dr Thomas Chauke and George Maluleke play, with small differences such as replacing the electric guitars with the marimba or xylophone, and incorporating modern sound effects such as Brass and Orchestra. The distinguishing feature about the Tsonga Traditional, Disco or Folk genre is the prevailing feminine aspect and lyrics that attempt to inspire consciousness about a specific social issue. The methodology of the chorus and verses are similar to the the call-and-response techniques used by the Vacopi who sing along to the *timbila*. Usually a male will sing a call-chorus and the backing females will follow it up with a response-chorus.

- Tsonga Electro (Xitsonga Traditional Folk emphasising electro synths and a type of Kwaito rhythm, e.g., Nozinja, Dj Khwaya, Magezi Chauke, Makuha Hlovo): This sub-genre of Xitsonga music usually comprises of a very fast tempo (around 160BPM to around 180BPM). It usually makes heavy use of synths, distortion, voice pitch, and has more of a performance feel to it. This is the Xitsonga music that has found its way to the United Kingdom and is loved by club enthusiasts with a liking for psychedelic rave music.
- Tsonga Ndzhumba (Xitsonga Traditional Folk emphasising a House tempo and, to a smaller degree, inter-cultural integration, e.g., Benny Mayengani, Kenny Bevhula, Prince Rhangani, Joe Shirimani): This is the Xitsonga music genre that the younger generation mostly listens to. The genre has more followers than the other sub-genres. The music is usually played at around 154BPM to around 160BPM. The music beat is almost always produced digitally like with the electro form. What stands out the most is the ability to experiment with this sub-genre. It is possible to integrate elements

from foreign genres into this music, such as gospel, Kelobedu, or even rhyme. The music has a wide following in South African cities, townships, and night-places.

- Tsonga Dancehall (Xitsonga Traditional Folk with Dancehall beats, e.g., Peta Teanet, Penny Penny, General Muzka, Wazimbo, Jeff Maluleke); this genre had its highest peak towards the beginning of the new millennium and is re-emerging into the South African scene very steadily. The music is slower and maintains a Tsonga cultural feel to it that distinguishes it from other types of dancehall music. A lot of Xitsonga artists usually branch out to this genre at certain points.
- Tsonga Afro-Pop: (Xitsonga Traditional Folk with afro/pop beats, e.g., Jeff Maluleke, Paul Ndlovu, Brian Bomba, Henny C): The pop culture of Xitsonga music. This is the music that many of the Tsonga youth (especially the young ladies) have slowly grown accustomed to over the years. It is slower than the mainstream Tsonga Disco type of sound, much slower than 160BPM. Love songs are most common in this genre.

HISTORY OF THE VATSWA

Introduction

Vatswa (sometimes spelled as Tshwa, Batjwa, Tsoua, or Vatwa) are a most peculiar group among the Vatsonga with regards to cultural integration. Today, the term “Vatswa” is used to describe a hypothetical group who are mostly found in southern Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The term generally describes an independent language similar to that of the Tonga, Chopi and Ronga people and is not specific to one particular tribe. Their language is known as Xitswa and is mostly spoken in the rural areas West of Inhambane in Mozambique and towards central Mozambique. Like Ronga it is very similar to the Tsonga language but in Mozambique has its own orthography of standardization. A smaller population can also be found in southern Zimbabwe. “Vatswa” in this context is used to refer to those groups who established the Tswa language and culture, as well as those who adopted the language and incorporated into the social life (Helgesson 1971).

The oldest traceable groups of the Vatswa appear to be the early Makwakwa clusters, the Manusa, and followed by the Mhandla groups of the Sono, Nkumbe, and Vilankulu. The Mhandla groups of the Xitswa-speaking community appear to be closest related to the Nkumbe (Nkumbi), Vilankulu and Vantama groups and when they arrived in their current areas near the coast of Mozambique they claim to have found groups of the Makwakwa already living in those parts (Earthy 1933). Maho (2009) believes Xihlengwe to be one of the main dialects of Xitswa.

To avoid confusion, the East-Central Khoi are identified under two major subgroups: the Shua and Tshwa, while the West-Central Khoi are identified

as the //Ani-Kxoe and Naro-|Ganda (Mitchell 2010). The distribution of such Khoi groups has been historically studied separately from the cultural background of the Xitswa-speaking groups; however, genetic studies have been conducted on the genetic diversity of the related people groups (Rowold *et al.* 2014). Some possible explanations of the similarity in name between the San Tshwa found mostly in Botswana and the Xitswa-speaking groups amongst the Vatsonga are (1) that the Vatswa of southern Mozambique have a similar “bush life” kind of historical background to the aforementioned San groups, and/or (2) that the Vatswa of southern Mozambique originate directly from these nomadic San tribes or intermarried with them and carried this name along with them.

Considering demographic information and the usage of Xitswa and related dialects, the classification of the modern “Vatswa” is inclusive of the Vahlengwe, Vamhandla, and Makwakwa groups. According to Junod, “Vatswa” was a name introduced to him by the Portuguese to refer to “first-line warriors” of the Nguni (Junod 1912, p. 18). There are many pre-Nguni groups who by the 1820s were still speaking Xitswa, for example the Vilankulu are said to originate from an ancestral group of the first Ngunis of the Mambo lineage (Earthy 1933), or even known in some parts as the Embo.

Xitswa as a standardised language also includes various non-standard dialects adopted from Rhonga and even affected in some words today borrowed from Nguni since the 1700s. The introduction of the Xitswa language to a lot of the Vatonga and Varhonga effectively created the Tswa-Rhonga language classification in South Africa, with the lexical system incorporating a lot of elements of the Rhonga language.

The main dialect that was spoken by the native Vatswa such as the Makwakwa and Manusa therefore developed into a language known as Xitswa in Mozambique that introduced a lot of sub-dialects under it.

Zimbabwean officials in the country appear to inaccurately group all its dialects under the umbrella term “Shangani”. This is the result of the Ngoni invasions of the 1800s which resulted in many of the Vatswa being conquered by Soshangane and other Ndwandwe groups, which led to a lot of intermixing between the people and their languages (Harries 1981).

Today there does not appear to be a direct cultural or linguistic similarity with other language groups also referred to as “Tswa”, such as the Tswa groups of Malawi and Congo Brazzaville who have a distinct language and traditional practices. Today the Vatswa also differ culturally and linguistically from the Tshwa who are part of the Khoi and San. The term “Tswa” in itself has been commonly used by colonialists and academics to refer to any African groups of Bushmen or native Pygmies that lived a largely hunter-gatherer lifestyle (Dominique 2016). There may also have been a common misidentification amongst the Swiss and Portuguese with the Xitsonga word “*vantshwa*” which translates to “newcomers”. For the purposes of our research below we consider only the Tswa groups who are native to Mozambique and speak the old Xitswa language and its related dialects. Oral and documented history suggests that the first of the Beja Tonga groups who migrated from eastern Africa encountered an ancient group of San-related groups who are thought to be an older group of these Vatswa (Maluleke 2013).

Earliest Traces

The Vatswa, together with the first Tonga groups, are part of the first African people in the south who began to develop a more advanced hunter-gatherer lifestyle in sub-Saharan Africa during the Paleolithic period. These are the people commonly referred to as the Bushmen or “pygmies” (another word for “indigenous people”). The Vatswa of Mozambique and parts of

Zimbabwe are also referred to in literature as Bathwa, Vatshwa, or Vatuva, and such variations have caused a lot of confusion in the research field. Rita-Ferreira (1959, p 68) shows that even the Nguni of Mozambique after 1820 came to be known as 'Vatua'. As a general African perspective it is important to understand that many of the early African people share a history and are related beyond the classifications polluted by academics or resettlement and changes in dialect. When these people then come to identify with a particular culture or language, it then becomes a challenge to many academics and historians to give a reliable description of the origin of those particular groups. Dominique (2016) for example identifies another Tswa group as original inhabitants of Congo Brazzaville, which many people could equate to belong to the same Xitswa-speaking people of Mozambique and the Tshwa San people of Botswana.

The native Vatswa of Mozambique show a continuous occupation within southern Africa, with no available records showing their first period of settlement, while in terms of migration and evolution theory there could indeed be a genetic link with other nomadic (or "Bushmen") groups from the central parts of Africa in areas such as the Congos, Malawi, and Tanzania, and in southern Africa around the Kalahari Desert and areas of Botswana and Namibia. However, the link between all those groups is theoretical as there has not been much research on that ancient history to link all these groups to each other.

The Makwakwa Xitswa-speaking group were one of the earliest of the Tswa groups who were encountered by the first groups of the Tonga and Chopi in southern Mozambique who today also constitute a part of the Valenge/Lenge (Earthy 1933, p. 6). These Makwakwa (also known as Kwakwi) were ancient hunter-gatherers who used bows and arrows to hunt and according to Webster (1976) the name Vatswa is the Tsonga term for native hunter-gatherers or pygmies. They were invaded by groups of the Tonga, followed by the Mambos of the Vamhandla and Vantama, and from

the mid-1500s by the Karanga and Rozwi who all later formed part of the Tswa, Tonga, Tsonga, and Chopi (Maluleke 2021). It should be noted that the Vatswa of today are not a particular lineage and many of them are referred to as Vatswa through identification with the language and customs.

Liesegang (2014a) attempts to link the Sono with the area of Manyikene. This Manyikeni is the Manica north of the Savi and near to the Varwa (Barwa) region. Sono is an old dynasty of the now Tswa-speaking people who also shared an old African link with those referred to as Barwa. "Varwa" and "Vatswa/Vatwa" could be a divergence in settlement and representation in language similarly to "Varonga" and "Vatsonga/Vatonga", thus the people came to identify with the Xitswa language. Liesegang (2014a) traces the Sono of the period 1500s-1700s to be related to the people identified as "Vacumba/Vacumba". A Vamhandla group of the Vilankulu who also included the Mukumbe lineage is believed to have originated from the old Mambo kings and they are today even included in the groups of the Valenge (Earthy 1933). The Sono in southern Mozambique are said to have been invaded by a group of the Valoyi before the Vahlengwe of Chauke came into the area (Liesegang 2014a).

Many writers have identified groups of the Tswa, Hlengwe, Vilankulu, Khosa, Ronga, Tembe and N'wanati as of Shona or Karanga origin simply from some history of origin in parts of Mashonaland and northern Mozambique, failing to take into account the extent to which Shona/Karanga groups had themselves settled among early groups of the Kiteve, Barwa, Tswa and other groups of Tonga people in Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Maluleke 2021). It is important to realise that when history shows an origin of the Sono from "the Karanga country", this does not necessarily mean that the Sono were of Karanga or Shona origin. Rita-Ferreira (1959, p. 57) and others, for example, refer to authors who have written on early Hlengwe history: "According to three Tswa writers, E.S. Mucambe, N.J. Mbanze and A. Mukhombo, the Hlengwe came from Shona country possibly at the end of the 15th century.

They later split into groups and one branch known as Mhandla occupied the southern part. In the second half of the 17th century the Dzivi clan of Tsonga or Swazi origin settled peace-fully in the territory of the Mhandla but later expelled these towards the region of Vilanculos" (Rita-Ferreira 1959, p. 57). These authors here identify the early Sono group of the Tswa as the Hlengwe, which may confuse some to think of the entirety of the Vahlengwe group including the Chauke. It is indicated however that the Chauke who went into the Tswa area did so during the mid-to-late 1600s coming from the now South African territory. Vamhandla in this instance refers to the Sono and the Vilankulu who are given a common description. The origin of the Vahlengwe from the place referred to as the "Shona country" could indicate their prehistoric settlement as part of the first groups to live in the country known today as Zimbabwe.

Southern Africa Migrations

Vatswa of Mozambique have their home in *Vutsonga* mostly around the southern part of Mozambique around the Inhambane Province, Hlengweni, and Bileni. They can be found today in the districts of Mabote, Massinga, Fonholouro, Guvuro, Vilanculo, and Inhassouro in Inhambane. Vatswa flourished mostly as pastoralists and agriculturists. They have migrated to various parts of southern Africa throughout history. The most well-known of the Vatswa among the Vatsonga is the group of Sono who gave rise to the lineage of Zinjiva or the Hlungwani.

One record suggests that a certain "Sono" had been a general who commanded one of the armies of Mutapa in the beginning of the 1500s, who had a status close to that of the first Changameri, and who rebelled against the reigning Mutapa Kakuya Kamunyaka in 1516 (Livneh 1976). Sono does not appear in the history of Mutapa after the rebellion of 1516. The

name Sono by the period of the 1600s-1700s was a dynasty that featured among the Vatswa, and who were later joined by the Vahlengwe of Xinyori (Chauke) who came in from the south in the start of the 1700s. It may have been that the name “Sono” mentioned in the history of the Mutapa era may have already been the name of a dynasty and the ruler who rebelled against the Mutapa may have been just one of the great chiefs of that lineage. The Xitswa-speaking group of the Sono who also formed part of the Vahlengwe are known to have been independent of the Mwene Mutapa in the mid-1500s. The Barwa and many of the Tonga groups towards the north of Mozambique had been made vassal kingdoms under the Empire of Mutapa by the start of the 1500s.

The incorporating of different kingdoms into the influential sphere of the Mutapa Empire in the 1400s and 1500s did create a distortion about which groups or clans constituted the actual Karanga. Recorded history, however, certainly gives evidence that groups such as the Vatswa, Varwa, Tawara, Tonga, Madanda, Manyika, Teve, and Sena constituted distinct and independent identities from the Karanga long before the rise to power of the Mwene Mutapa in the late 1400s (Maluleke 2021). Also, various groups of the Tonga are reported to have settled below the Zambezi before the Karanga or Kalanga came into the area (Chigwedere 2016; Maluleke 2021).

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

The contributions made by the Tswa people can never be underestimated. The Vatswa played a big part in the development of various language groups throughout southern Africa and their migrations formed the basis on which many of the South African tribes began to expand. The Sono group even had trade relations with the empire of Mwene Mutapa but maintained their independence when they settled in the south of Mozambique and integrated

with the Vahlengwe of Bangwani, the Valenge, Chopi, and Tonga of Inhambane.

The early Vatswa played a crucial part in unifying Xitswa, Xironga and Xitonga from a time before the 1300s, which ultimately formed what is today considered Xitsonga, Xilenge, and many of the early dialects. The language groups including Xitonga Xirhonga, and Xitswa were the main precursors for the languages that later developed (Xirhonga, Xitembe, Xitsonga, and various tribal dialects). Both Xitswa and Xitonga are considered to have developed from ancestral language groups originally from central and West Africa. The interactions between the Vatswa, Vatonga, Vacopi, and Varhonga from early on during the 1200s to 1500s allowed for the development of the language that is today known as one of South Africa's official languages, standardised as Xitsonga.

Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs):

Hlungwani
Manuse/Manusa
Mhandla
Mukumbe

Sono
Yingwane
Zinjiva
Nkavele
Nyakule
Nyapondzo
Nyaviri
Makwakwa/Kwakwi
[...etc.]

HISTORY OF THE VATEMBE

Introduction

The Vatembe of Mayeta and Mabhudu (Maputju) organised themselves around the districts of the south-eastern plain of Mozambique and KwaZulu-Natal, to eventually come to govern independently from each other. The older generation in KwaZulu Natal speak a particular dialect known as Xitembe and their forefathers had close trade relations with the Mthethwa Confederacy and the old Kalanga country in modern-day Zimbabwe. The city of Maputo in Mozambique is named after the Tembe king Mabhudu (Maputju/Maputsu). The Vatembe are part of the Tonga (Thonga) lineage by origin and they form a part of the oldest Tsonga kingdoms. Some of the names amongst the Tembe forefathers draw much parallel to the folk tales of a few other tribes within the Vatsonga ethnic group, and particularly the Vahlengwe, of ancestors with the names Silambowa and Ludahumba (Junod 1912, p. 23-24; Junod 1913, p. 327).

The Vatembe of KwaZulu Natal today have similar traditions to the Zulus and thus it appears that a lot of them today may believe they are originally part of the Zulu or Nguni. That the Vatembe have however been implementing many of such elements that today seem to be “of Zulu origin” since early settlement in southern Mozambique is quite certain, and they have had many of such customs even before the formation of the Zulu kingdom, as for example they take after the 'Leopard's Culture' of iron weapons and animal loin cloth as known in the academic field of Mapungubwe and the Kalanga of Zimbabwe and Botswana.

The Tembe dialect is very similar to Xirhonga and has as well contributed to the development of the *Tekela* Nguni dialects, which in part can be attributed to the high level of contact shared between the Vatembe and Nguni groups from an early stage (possibly from as early as the 1400s). Among some of the Nguni nations, the Tembe are known to be related to the Dlamini and the Zingili. Webster (1986, p. 614) even went as far as to draw the connection that the Swati people were “an offshoot of the Thonga people”.



Earliest Traces

According to some academics, the Vatembe are part of the Tonga groups (sometimes referred to as the *Tekela* group) and were one of the first to settle in the area around St. Lucia Bay after arriving along the East-African coast (Skelcher 2003), which appears to have occurred during the 1350s. The Tonga, Tswa, and Rhonga languages are described as a group of sub-language that developed from the Niger-Congo group of languages originally from the central Parts of Africa (Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative Plan 2000; Ross 1999; Stuart & Malcolm 1950).

According to the work by Mathebula (2013) the Vatembe are also a part of the Rhonga-speaking east-coast group who are thought to have split from the Kalanga and Shona country (Zimbabwe) and settled along the coast at a particular time between 1350 and 1500. The first Rhonga settlements along the coast of Maputo and northern Natal therefore may have occurred shortly after the 1350s and the earliest traceable record about the group is by the sailor and chronicler Perestrelo between 1554 and 1564 after a Portuguese ship travelled the area on a colonial pursuit, where the sailors met some of the earliest traceable Tembe and Rhonga kings. This particular meeting may have very well been part of the exodus of the strong Portuguese presence in Mozambique. They recorded the names of the river Zembe (Tembe) and mention groups of tribes matching the settlement history of the Tembe and other Ronga-speaking groups.

Southern Africa Migrations

The Vatembe identify as part of the Tonga group and they share a common historical background with some of the Varhonga. They have interacted in the past with the kingdoms of Zimbabwe, the kingdoms of Natal, and the kingdoms of Mozambique, Swaziland, and Lesotho. Early movements within southern Africa therefore show a lot of activity around southern Mozambique and Natal.

The first of the Vatembe known to have settled in the Maputsu Bay were led by their king, Tembe, and included the Konde and Xonge groups that split from the main group. When the San Bento Portuguese ship wrecked along the coast of St. Lucia in 1554, it was apparently some groups of the Varhonga and Tembe who helped those Portuguese sailors to safety (Skelcher 2003). Following this act of bravery from the Vatembe, the Portuguese secured trade relations with the Tsonga people of the coast. The Vatembe apparently traded goods such as copper, brass, beads, and cloth in exchange for gold, ivory, and various items (Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative Plan 2000; Silverston n.d.; Stuart & Malcolm 1950).

According to Mthethwa (1995, p. 11), before the Mthethwa tribe moved into the area along the uMfolozi River under Xaba during the 1720s they found a diverse group of Thonga tribes who were “already in occupation of the land along the seafront where Sokhulu is today”.

Chewins (2016, p. 730) mentions that the Tembe chiefs Mabudu and Mapanielle who were brothers to the paramount chief Mangova/Mangobe entered into a political alliance with the Ngunis of Mthethwa and other nearby tribes, for the purpose of securing trade with European traders along the Maputo trade routes. One of the main resources to attract European traders towards Maputo during the 1700s and 1800s was ivory. Ivory was

commonly bought from the local African chiefs in exchange for copper, cloth, and beads. It is evident from these accounts that the Tembe people had dominance over the more important trade areas along the coast and on many occasions they had to act as intermediaries in securing trade between the sailors and various Nguni tribes inland. By the year 1816 the Tembe were still in alliance with the Mthethwa, where the reigning Tembe leader of the Mangobe branch, known as Makasana, strengthened his affiliation with Dingiswayo (Mthethwa 1995, p. 71-72). The alliance was also strengthened with a marriage alliance that was organised for Dingiswayo at the Mabudu capital (Kloppers 2003, p. 41). When Dingiswayo was killed by the Ndwandwes, Makasana extended the alliance of the Mabudu to Shaka Zulu and thus the Mabudu were seen as a strong ally of the Zulus and were not plundered in Shaka's rampage, one of the few nearby kingdoms to retain their independence at the time. The Tembe grew in power and were seen by nearby Nguni tribes as a strong ally. The Swazi royal family of Dlamini are known to have even sent their daughter, Princess Dzambile, to be married into the Tembe royal family at some point. All these events are indicative of the important role that these first Tsonga tribes had with their neighbours and how they had an influence on the internal and political affairs of their allies. The Tembe can be said to have had a major impact on early large-scale migrations of Nguni and Tsonga groups in the early periods of South African history. They commonly praise themselves using the salutation "Mthonga" and it is even evident they allowed their kingdom to be recognised as Tongaland.

There is another sub-group of the Tembe in southern Mozambique who now live as part of the Chopi people near the Indian Ocean below Inhambane, who go by the name of Matsinye/Matsinhe (Mtani), and they are said to have come along with a group of the Mthethe (the Mthethe by 1927 were under the chieftdom of Xihalu N'wamusu); they came from the land of the Varhonga a long time ago (Junod 1927, p. 60-68). They have been settled near Manjacazi and near the Indian Ocean even before the

Mfecane of the early 1800s. In the 1700s the Mtani near Nyambavale Lagoon were invaded by the Nyantsumbu who were part of the old Valoyi groups.

Tembe

Tembe is the earliest traceable ancestor of the Tembe clan who appears to have lived during the early 1500s. It is believed that the clan was led by Tembe all the way from Mashonaland and were part of the early kingdoms there (Mathebula 2013). There are no proper records of their actual origin in Mashonaland or a specific description of their language during the time of the first leader known as Tembe. The Tembe group however shares a history with the Rhonga groups at the Maputo Bay and are considered a part of the broader Tonga/Thonga language group as per their praise poetry.

Silambowa

Silambowa (or Nsilambowa/Silamboya) is thought to have died in 1746 (Kloppers 2003). He is one of the most commonly known names amongst the Vatembe and is the son of Ludahumba. After the death of Ludahumba in 1728, Silambowa ascended to the Tembe throne. Silambowa then fathered Muhali (Muharhi) and Mangove (Mangobe). Muhali and Mangove became independent from each other after a succession feud, which led to the formation of the senior Tembe branch led by Muhali and the junior branch led by Mangobe. The junior branch became more powerful than the senior

branch through trade and it established better alliances that enabled it to gain more prominence with neighbouring groups.

Mabudu

Mabudu, the son of Mangobe, established himself as one of the dominant forces in what is now KwaZulu-Natal and his armies were some of the more powerful of the Vatembe. His power and influence extended a helping hand to other nearby tribes and he is known to have formed a very strong alliance with the Mthethwas. Dingiswayo, a later king of the Mthethwa, is known to have gotten military assistance from the Mabudu lineage during his ascension to power as the Mthethwa king in the early 1800s (Kloppers 2003, p. 40).

When Dingiswayo died, the Mabudu branch continued to form close relations with Shaka Zulu and it is stated that the Zulus never raided or conquered those Thonga people at the time (Webster 1986). After the British government defeated the Zulus and made political gains into South Africa the Tembe people were still independent under their own kingdom of Tongaland but were later forcefully incorporated into the districts controlled by the Zulu kingdom while the other branch remained in Maputo (Mozambique). The branch annexed to KwaZulu Natal then had to learn isiZulu at school while the branch in Mozambique continued to speak Ronga and even contributed to the standardization of Xironga through the missionary work but also had to learn Portuguese.

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

Vatembe, together with the Vatswa, Hlengwe, Van'wanati and Valoyi have played a significant role in trade with the Rozwi, Kalanga, Pedi, Swazi, and the kingdom of Mapungubwe. They have also helped to protect the bay area around the historic Lourenco Marques and around Maputo and the Delagoa Bay.

The Vatembe under Chief Israel Tembe are the leaders and managers of the Tembe Elephant Park. The Vatembe have been living in this area for a long time but were removed during the colonial period. The Vatembe were a very powerful kingdom (one of the most powerful kingdoms in southern Africa) and they have managed to efficiently lead their people while adequately preserving the wildlife around this area. Eight of Africa's remaining thirty large-tusk elephants were living in the Tembe Elephant Park by 2019 and had more than 220 elephants in total. The park falls under the leadership of the Tembe Tribal Ward and it was formalised in 1983. The Tembe continue to show good leadership might within the field of nature conservation.

Kosi Bay, which falls under the tribal land system, requires authorization from the Tembe chief in matters concerning this land in Manguzi. This is where the Tembe Thonga did a lot of fishing in older times and is today a marvellous tourist attraction. The estuarine system, along with the beaches and nearby ocean, was declared to be protected areas in terms of the RAMSAR system which prevents illegal fishing.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

Muhali	Mangobe	Mtani/Matsinye
	Israel Mabudu II	
	Mhlupheki (r. 1928-1950) –	
	*Mzimba (r. 1951- 2000)	
	Ngwanase (d.1928)	
Bukutje II	Tluma/Hluma – *Musongi	Gavasi Mtani
	(Noziyingili r. 1854-1886)	
Mabayi		Matekani
	Makasana (r. 1800-1854)	
Bukutje		Dikhupe
	Muwayi	
Bangwane		Matsinye
	Mabudu	
Mayeta	(Maputu)	Makulani
Muhari/Muhali	Mangobe II	Mambani
Silambowa (d. 1746)	Silambowa (d. 1746)	Mtani
Ludahumba (d. 1728)	Ludahumba (d. 1728)	
Sikuke (r. 1692-1710)	Sikuke (r. 1692-1710)	
N'wangobe/Mangobe	N'wangobe/Mangobe	

Nkupu Tembe	Nkupu Tembe	
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Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Bangwane
Bukutje
Hobyani
Mabayi
Manyisa
Mayeta
Mkwanase
Muhali
Mthembu
Nkupu
Mangobe

Mtani
Silambowa
Tembe
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family names from the Tembe tribe, cited from Izithakazelo.net (2016):

*“Mthonga
Tembe, Ngolanyama Khamangathi, Khamel’abahloti Mlawu wantshenga
Nyomfi wa ndawu Kabahlomeli
Hlomela Hlomela
Adingi omnyama
Kameli bahluthi
Ngwanase
Noziyingili”*

HISTORY OF THE VAN'WANATI

Introduction

The Van'wanati clan's history indicates they are part of the groups historically known as the "Beja Tonga" and some of the told history indicates they are part of the Mozambican tribes who still identify themselves as Tonga and Vacopi in the places known as eNyembane (Inhambane), Manjacazi, Makwakwa, Xai-Xai, Zavora, and Bileni (Maluleke 2013).

The Van'wanati clan claims to have historical links to other kingdoms as far as Malawi, Tanzania, Sudan, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique respectively (Maluleke 2013; Van'wanati Clan 2015b). The unity shared by the Van'wanati people is inherent in their descent and through a bond to recognisable kinship. The clan is led by local headmen (*tihosana*) and traditional leaders (*tihosi*); and at the centre of authority of each tribal house is the most senior traditional leader (*hosi-nkulu*) who is regarded as the main decision maker of all aspects of the clan and its concerns, like with other historically related Tonga groups. These tribal houses sometimes meet on a regular basis to discuss and decide on matters concerning the entire clan (Van'wanati Clan 2015a; Van'wanati Clan 2015b). The Van'wanati clan are only a fraction of a larger Vatsonga nation. The unity shared by Van'wanati and other Vatsonga is through the Xitsonga language as well as through the Xitsonga customs and traditions.

Earliest Traces

The Van'wanati group are said to originate from the more southern parts of East Africa. According to the Mhinga Dynasty (2010), the Van'wanati were led by one of their early kings from near the Great Lakes region towards Tanzania, and headed south to finally reach the areas of what are now Mozambique and South Africa. According to the Van'wanati folk tales, the group originates from one of the first tribes of the Vatsonga – the Beja Tonga people, who before arrival in Mozambique came from the Great Lakes region (Matos 1976; Maluleke 2013; Maluleke 2021). These groups had initially came under attack from Arabs from the south of the Sudan and the area within the Great Lakes experienced a severe drought, forcing many of the people within the area to expand to other regions throughout southern Africa. The Van'wanati were amongst the main Beja Tonga group to head South, travelling along the Lake Malombe and Tanganyika towards Mozambique. According to some academics, these migrations to the south of Africa appear to have occurred at some time between 200AD and 500AD (Velez Grilo 1958; Junod 1977; Erasmus 1995, Newman 1995). To this day there are still large pockets of groups called Tonga near the Lake Malawi, Lake Nyasa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Zambia (Huffman 2016), all of whom have developed their own distinct language and culture as time progressed. Mathebula and Mokgoatšana (2020, p. 3) mention that “evidence suggests the Van'wanati are of Tonga origin and occupied the Indian Ocean coast in the southeast of present-day Mozambique”. The Tonga who are found in the north-east in the Mtoka area of Zimbabwe (also known as the Budja) and many of whom today speak a Shona dialect, are of ancient Tonga extraction and are related to these people (Lawton 1967).

In their migratory movement South, The Beja Tonga tribes began to form states and established one of the first Tonga kingdoms in southern Mozambique between 200AD and 500AD, this region later came to be

known as *vutonga* and appears in Arab and Portuguese records of the 1500s as “Tonge” and “Otongue/Utongue” (Maluleke 2021). Others settled in Zambia and parts of Zimbabwe, and their early lives depended largely on agriculture, hunting, and fishing. Velez Grilo (1958) links the Beja (Bedjah) tribes to the ancient African kingdoms of Nubia and Kush. Separately looking at the people groups and languages of Sudan, which is the location of ancient Nubia, there does appear to be a group recognised as the Beja and Nuba people as well as a mountain called the “Tonga Mountain” or “Nuba Mountain” in those parts of Sudan (Sudan 2004) though the link with these people today is sketchy and should not be overgeneralized. There does not seem to be much modern studies that attempt to link the various southern-African groups referred to as “Tonga” with the mentioned region and the relationship between these groups remains theoretical. Chigwedere (2016) on Karanga, Nyai, and Tonga history does attempt to link the Tonga people (including many of those in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa) to those parts of East Africa. The idea that all the people known as ‘Tonga’ in southern Africa are directly related is not a certainty; however, the available history indicates they all originate from the same place (Chigwedere 2016). The Tonga people of Inhambane without a doubt practiced a few of the traditions such as the *timbila* as well as *tinhlanga* and other tattooing similarly to the Vacopi and Vatsonga. These three groups (Tonga, Chopi, Tsonga) also attended initiation school in the 1500s (Maluleke 2021), and many of them also practiced male circumcision at the time.

Considering the early migrations of the southern-African people groups (in what is commonly referred to as the “Bantu migrations”), it is reasonable to deduce that the early Tonga groups settled at various regions in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and near the Limpopo River (previously known as Nyampura), generally at areas where there are large lakes and even so at the coastal area of southern Mozambique after migrating from those eastern parts of Africa, in fleeing from the Arabs who raided the east and northern parts of Africa. There is a related group in Zambia who speaks a

distinct and separate Tonga language that has been studied in great detail by Hopgood (1992) in his work 'A Practical Introduction to Chitonga', which seems to have a limited similarity to modern day Xitsonga and is considered a very distinct language. The Zambian and Malawian groups of Tongas therefore can be said to constitute distinct and separate groups in both language and material culture, although the African relationship is hard to ignore as Africans tend to share a common history as is the case with the modern Egyptians, Palestinians, and Assyrians who are commonly traced to the same ancestral tree.

Of all 'Tonga' languages in Africa, the one that appears to be closer to Xitsonga, Xitswa, and Xicopi is referred to as "*Xinyembane*" in the Inhambane province of Mozambique. This Gitonga language is an ancient form related to Chopi that was heavily affected by Persian and Portuguese languages and the people's culture was also influenced to some extent by the Semitic customs. Rita-Ferreira (1959, p. 58) who refers to Dr Elsdon-Dew and a serological study, came to the conclusion that "the Chopi and the Khokhas [Tonga] are the most primitive Black race investigated by him and that their ancestors belonged to the first wave of Bantu peoples to enter this region". The Tonga of Inhambane were also nicknamed "*Vocica/Vacica*" (meaning 'the traders'). They are a very ancient group and a lot of their history is lost in the "grey areas of history" before history was properly recorded in writing.

Historically known Tonga groups settled at Inhambane (southern Mozambique) and Xai-Xai, which is the geographic location from where the Van'wanati and many of the other Tsonga clans have branched out from after their language integrated with the eastern Tswa group. Written and oral traditions claim they were the first to interact with the San people (perhaps referring to sections of the Tswa/Tshwa) within those areas (Maluleke 2013). Their manufacturing methods are also some of the oldest in that region (Lawton 1967). The Vatonga and Varonga who settled in Mozambique, together with the Vatswa and Vahlengwe groups, are in

essence credited by historians to be the initial founders of the Tsonga ethnic group, based on historical research, language, and assimilation data (Lawton 1967; Junod 1912; Junod 1913; Junod 1977; Velez Grilo 1958). Evidence therefore exists to indicate that the Tonga identity (often spelled as Thonga) predates the arrival of Europeans in Africa and may not even have originated in Mozambique or South Africa and the appellation of 'Tsonga' is as much a product of this ancient identity as with "*avuxeni – evutsonga* (where the sun rises)" (Junod 1912).

Liesegang (2014b) speaks of N'wanati immigrations in southern Africa tracing back to the 16th century (1500s) or earlier and further mentions existence of the Makwakwa in the 1600s, indicating the relative antiquity of these people. This time period seems to be in reference to the earlier forefathers of the Makwakwa, which seems to point to a time period of N'wanati himself (Gunyule) since Makwakwa of the Mondlane lineage existed during the period of the late 1700s.

The farthest names remembered among the Van'wanati are encompassed in the salutations of 'Pajila' and 'Panda', which are names traced to the early period of the 1500s and still remembered in Inhambane and parts of Chopiland area in southern Mozambique. The name Panda is still used today by the Makwakwa branch of the Mondlane lineage and a place also given the name of Panda is today situated nearer to Inhambane Bay and Homoine.

In an old map of the time period 1505-1760 the older Panda is seen in southern Mozambique situated just above what is today Bileni and Chibuto near the Limpopo River and identified as one of the kingdoms of the larger region of Vutonga which on the map is written as Otongwe (Hall 1909). This is where the Mondlane branch of N'wanati was based (between today's Mabalani up to Chibuto) before they relocated more towards the coast, while the other N'wanati sections were primarily based in the areas of today's Manjacazi, Ngunyulane or Xikomo/Chicomo, and Chibuto all found near the Limpopo River.

Southern Africa Migrations

Early Van'wanati settlement in southern Africa was mostly centred in the Panda region, Chibuto, Kamaphandani/Mandlakazi and near Inhambane (Nyembane) and Xai-Xai, and a branch of the Nkome have been found to have briefly stayed in Tonga in Mpumalanga in the 1700s. A Makwakwa group is reported to have relocated from areas of Chibuto and headed towards Inhambane in the period 1839-1840 (Liesegang 2014a), and can be found today mostly around modern-day Panda near Homoine.

During one of their early periods in southern Africa, around the mid-1600s, Van'wanati and other Vatsonga were under the leadership of their king Gunyule the son of Xixangaxile (or Xiva), who was one of the powerful rulers of the land where his people resided, and is celebrated today to have given birth to many of the Vatsonga of the Van'wanati who in Mozambique are today found mostly in the settlements of Panda, in Khambanyani, Makwakwa, N'wadjahane, and other nearby areas. Gunyule's son, Malenga, according to history succeeded him to the throne and separating from the Makwakwa led his people towards the Limpopo River (Mhinga Dynasty 2010; Maluleke 2021). According to historical records, Van'wanati of the Maluleke section first settled around the confluence of the Levhubu and Limpopo River in what later became the Transvaal, during the period 1640-1720, long before many of the other Vatsonga clans and the Amashangane migrated from Mozambique after 1820 (Malungana 1994, p. 56). The available historical records thus indicate that the Maluleke branch of the Van'wanati had been established within the Phafuri game reserve and surrounding areas after the mid-1600s. During the early 1700s Malenga's children Muswana, Maxakadzi, and Ncelwa were old enough to have formed part of his battle regiments and by 1720 Maxakadzi was already a known leader of the Maluleke (Witter 2010; Maluleke 2021).

During the middle-1700s, a group identified as “the Mashakadzes” (people led by Maxakadzi) were very active in copper, bronze, and iron trade between the Venda, Pedi, and other merchants, often making long trips in and out of what is today modern Limpopo province and into the Delagoa Bay (Bandama 2013). One leader of the Maluleke known as Xitanda in the early 1800s even entered into an alliance with the house of Ramabulana before the Boers came into the area and restructured much of the setup of both groups (Tempelhoff 1999). Le Roux (1999, p. 45) also makes reference to the Nhlangu, Thovele, Valauti, Maxakadzi, and Valemba in relation to trade connections in the 1600s-1700s:

“[T]hese traders were from 'Sanguano' (Hlanganu area), 'Inthowelle, Paraotte, Machicosje, Walembe and Chiremandelle' The Walembes, who are always coming here with those of Inthowelle,.. are a nation which lives on top [north] of the country of Inthowelle The aforementioned Walembe was said to be rich in gold too, and this nation was also doing trade with the Portuguese in the direction of the aforementioned Sena and Manica”

There is a group of the Mondlane who left the now South Africa and around the Limpopo River and headed back towards the coastal areas of southern Mozambique in Chopiland, just after the Maluleke had left those areas and headed north-west along the Limpopo River. This group of the Mondlane of Nkome seems to have headed back into Chopiland during the mid-to-late-1700s after a brief war with a group of the Valoyi of the Mavila branch. The Makunyula who are of Tonga origin are also known to have led a group of the Valoyi of the Mavila branch into Mozambique during the time when the Mavila were under Mbandze (Junod 1927, p. 68). The “Makunyule” are related to the early Tonga groups who were to be found in what is today the Mpumalanga province in the place called Tonga and have an affinity with the Mathonsi and Bila groups.

According to oral traditions of the Nkome Mondlane and Makwakwa, reported by Liesegang (2014b), history has it that some of the ancestors of the N'wanati had come from "Veche" in the 1700s and that they lived close to the Nkomati River before moving into Mozambique. That is to say, they lived near the Vahlanganu and Vankomati or were briefly raiding these parts, after which time they (the Mondlane) headed to Mozambique after defeating the Mbandze. This is the region between the Ngwenya River (Crocodile River) and Limpopo River. Among the Makwakwa it is thought to have been Makumbani the father of Xilatani who also came from this area (Liesegang 2014b). By the 1800s the independent state of the Mondlane in southern Mozambique had an administrative system and the family members were the principal administrators of lands (Liesegang 2014a).

The Mkhwanazi branch appears to have separated from the other branches of the Chopi or N'wanati from very early on, possibly somewhere during the 1600s-1700s or earlier and they formed part of an alliance which became known in literature as the Mthethwa Confederacy under Dingiswayo (Mthethwa 1995, p. 49) later on during the early 1800s. The Nyambose lineage had formed a Confederacy of an alliance of tribes that worked together in traditional-political affairs and to secure trade and control over primary resources. Later when it developed into the kingdom of Mthethwa the Mkhwanazis served under Dingiswayo, and at the time they were still referred to as Tonga. The name Mkhwanazi actually relates to "Mn'wanati" and was later Zulufied to Mkhwanazi (sometimes spelled as Mkwanzazi or Mkwanzati in the Tekeza dialect of Swaziland). Many of the Mkhwanazis in South Africa today speak isiZulu while the ones found in Limpopo speak Xitsonga. They form a part of the original cluster of the Tonga and Chopi who also went by the name Nzhonga or Ndonga.

During 1903-1905 the Mhinga section of the N'wanati was forcefully removed from what is today the northern parts of the Kruger National Park by the Apartheid government and relocated towards Malamulele, followed by a second wave later on in 1969 when the Makuleke community was also

removed from the Phafuri area of the Kruger National Park and relocated to Ntlhaveni in Malamulele (Mathebula 2013; Maluleke 2021).

In 1961 Paramount Chief Adolph Sundhuza II Mhinga led a campaign and compelled other Tsonga traditional leaders to withdraw from the Vhembe Regional Authority and the Sibasa Local Council amid fears over the possible loss of tribal land and cultural influence. Malamulele was formally established as a political entity and Chief Risimati Chanyela Mulamula had the honours of referring to it as “Malamulele” which meant to suggest that they were the “rescuers” or “saviours” of the homeland. This period marked one of the biggest migrations and restructuring of Tsonga settlements in South Africa and led to the establishment of Gazankulu. The time marked the last great resettling of the Tsonga people in South Africa as many of the people had to move from areas within neighbouring homelands to be placed within the administration of Gazankulu.

Gunyule

To define the Van'wanati clan in ancestral terms, they can best be regarded as the descendants of Gunyule, who was also known as "*Xinyela Babeni*" or "*N'wanati*" (Van'wanati Clan 2015a, p. 4). The Van'wanati further regard Gunyule as one of the greatest leaders who is responsible for the legacy of the clan, through his leadership role over the Vacopi and sections of the *Vatonga va Nyembane*, two amongst some the most early Vatsonga groups, who were also the attacking and hunting sections of those Tsonga people. Some of the tribes under Gunyule included the Masangu, Makwakwa, Mabote, and Mondlane lineages, among many other Vatsonga groups in the 1600s. It is not known for certain how many wives and children Gunyule had but there were many, however the most traceable branches thought to descend directly from him are of Malenga, Mondlani, Makwakwa, Matola,

Mabote, and Masangu. Some who recognise as part of the Van'wanati however claim to owe their N'wanati allegiance based on a common settlement and cultural affinity and not necessarily through descent from Gunyule.

The ancient group of the Vacopi is represented in Van'wanati tradition as an elephant for a totem, which the Vacopi were able to overpower during their early hunting days by digging large trenches and attacking using poisoned arrows. Although Maxakadzi is said to have used bows and arrows to conquer some groups of the Vanyayi in the early-to-mid 1700s (Junod, 1905, p. 226-227), the Maluleke section of the Van'wanati cannot accurately be equated with the modern Vacopi of Chopiland and it is rare to find the Maluleke surname among those people, as the Maluleke are a breakaway section of the old Vacopi and the Maluleke surname was founded by Malenga after the separation from the Makwakwa. Other early Vacopi were the Vilankulu and Nkumbe who must have entered Chopiland at a time between the early 1500s to middle 1700s (Junod 1927; Earthy 1933). Vacopi people of today are a mixture of ethnic identities, including the Tonga, Karanga, Ndau, Tswa, and Nguni.

Malenga

Malenga is the founder of the Maluleke dynasty, which effectively rose to prominence after leaving the area near Xai Xai and Nwajahane in the south of Mozambique where the Limpopo River runs into the Indian Ocean (Bandama 2013). Malenga, the successor to Gunyule's throne, gathered his part of the tribe and headed north-west for the area of Fhukwe, as is customary in the Xitsonga culture for the eldest Tsonga prince to leave his father's domain in order to lead his own tribe independently of the others to reduce conflict. The rite of separation of the princes from the royal capital

was held sacred to Van'wanati tradition, as the customs were also set in place to ensure that inter-marriage and predispositions to illness are minimised, and for the protection of the royal lineage in case of an attack on the capital. His followers were also known as Valenge (variously spelled as Valengue and Valenga). Traditional leaders always had more than one name; here Malenga could have inherited the name Malenga from the word "*vulenge*" which the Chopi people explain to mean "west" (Earthy 1933), which is the direction to which Malenga took his people. Malenga was also known as Maluleke (from the Xitsonga phrase "*ku luleka*").

The Chopi and Lenge area in southern Mozambique experienced increased attacks in the period between 1600 and 1800 as it was a place of wealth and trade. Malenga was born at some time during the mid-to-late-1600s. He died by the lake Pfukwe in what is today Mabalane during the early 1700s. Among Malenga's children, Ncelwa was the first born, however, Muswana and Maxakadzi were the ones born by the first wife of Malenga of royal background (Mhinga Dynasty 2010). Muswana and Maxakadzi both married into the Manganyi house as they were birthed by the same mother. All three sons were the leaders of Malenga's regiments. Maxakadzi rose to power and was ultimately left as the only head chief and primary administrator of land of all of Malenga's sons after the death of his elder brother Muswana.

Ncelwa

Ncelwa is known as the first born of Malenga. Ncelwa had a son named Mayeke who gave rise to the command of "*Mayekee!!!*" in today's praise poetry within the Van'wanati Maluleke group (Malungana 1994). Oral traditions claim that although Ncelwa was the first born, he was not the one born by the first wife of Malenga. It is also claimed that Ncelwa was refused the right to inherit Muswana's wife by Malenga after refusing to defend the

tribe in battle after the death of Muswana as his mother feared he would be killed by the Vanyayi. Mayeke, like his father Ncelwa, did not inherit chieftaincy or land but after the period of Dlamani the Xikundu section of Mayeke rose to prominence under Nkuri and Mhinga and were the first in the house of Ncelwa to inherit land and chieftaincy in what is today South Africa in the period 1836-1868 (Dicke 1926).

Under Nkuri the Xikundu and Makuleke are thought to have defeated a group of Voortrekkers who were headed to the coastal areas of Mozambique in 1836. Nkuri's other name was Xakani/Xakana and was written in records as "Sakana" (Dicke 1926). The name Xakani is still used today in the house of Chavani of the Mhinga lineage and the former Minister Collins Chavani even ran a non-profit foundation called the Xakani Foundation.

Muswana

After the death of Malenga, the throne passed to Muswana, who was the eldest son of Malenga by the queen mother. Muswana led the clan in honour of his father, and practised his authority with care for the sustainability of the clan. He led his army through battles and ensured the notoriety of the clan by fighting groups such as the Vhangona and the Vhalembethu vha Nzhelele (Mhinga Dynasty 2010). Other campaigns reached in as far as the regions of Mutale and Malema and this even led to the emergence of the village known today as Shakadza located in the Mutale Local Municipality. This dynasty of rulers was very active in producing iron, metal, and bronze.

Muswana was married to the first-born daughter of the Manganyi family of Bungu (of the Ripindzi dynasty), a young princess by the name of N'wabungu. Muswana, however, was killed in battle against the Nyayi

people not long after this (Mhinga Dynasty 2010). This left his younger brother, Maxakadzi, compelled by tradition and Tsonga customs, to marry N'wabungu senior in order to resume the legacy of Muswana. Maxakadzi was also in love with N'wabungu's younger sister (*N'wa Bungu lontsongo*), who they had a son together by the name of Guyu (Mhinga Dynasty 2010).

Maxakadzi and Muswana's wife N'wabungu (*N'wa Bungu lonkulu*) also had a son; he was named Dhamani but some people also called him "*Ximambani*" (Small Mamba). Maxakadzi led his section of the tribe from the confluence of the Limpopo and Olifants River in the early 1700s and established a kingdom at Nyandweni and the place known today as Mapai, before moving more inland.

Maxakadzi

Maxakadzi was known as a great elephant and rhinoceros hunter during the 1700s (Bandama 2013). He organised trade routes and led a kingdom that bartered ivory and other goods of value, such as beads, pottery, iron, corn, and fabric. He established a kingdom at Nyandweni around the confluence of the Limpopo River and Rivubye, and during the late 1700s was well known as one of the most popular leaders of the area. The name originates from "*ku xakadza*" which means to attack fearfully. Through years of terrain experience and military conquest, Maxakadzi was able to subdue other tribes and strategically installed tribal sections within the later Transvaal area to secure hunting grounds and to boost the security of his capitals (Junod, 1905; Junod 1912). Much of the land covering what became the homeland of the Tsonga people was secured at a very early stage through these conquests. His two sons Guyu and Dlamani became his head chiefs and administered land in parts of what are today the south-west of Mozambique (Guyu) and the north east of South Africa (Dlamani). According

to Chief Rodriguez Mapai (2011 cited in Bandama 2013, p. 43), when king Maxakadzi died, “an iron hoe and an elephant bone” were placed on his grave to mark his achievements. Maxakadzi’s grave is under the guardianship of the Mapai traditional authority in Mozambique.

Guyu and Dhamani, two of Maxakadzi’s sons, grew up together as siblings, and they would often argue about who would ascend to the throne, as is common with royal siblings. It was then resolved to them that Dhamani was born by the oldest queen mother, and that even though Guyu was older by birth, Dhamani was older through the older queen mother, who by Xitsonga custom should carry the birth-right to a king (Mhinga Dynasty 2010), as Dhamani in the African traditional sense is regarded as the son of Muswana and not Maxakadzi. Both Dhamani and Guyu were of royalty, nonetheless. According to Bandama (2013, p. 45), one of Guyu’s daughters often performed rainmaking rituals and appeasements at the gravesite of Maxakadzi. This is an ancient tradition to pay respects to the ancestors as in the tradition of *magandzelo* and *ku phahla*.

The Maluleke of the Maxakadzi branch traded with Dutch merchants at the Delagoa Bay during the 1720s (Paver 1933; Witter 2010). A Dutch traveller by the name of Van de Capelle reported on instances of such trade operations. According to these accounts, on August 3, 1723 the Malulekes came along with copper and tin bars for the Dutch in exchange for cloth and maize. The Malulekes also purchased copper from the Dutch which they needed to mix with tin in order to produce bronze (Theal 1902; Paver 1933). These items carried much value in those times. Another account indicates that later on in 1732 the Malulekes again traded with the Dutch in the same location (Theal 1902). This merchandise was used to make a range of usable utensils and also weapons. Bandama (2013, p. 257) explains how they often used copper and tin bars by mixing it to produce traditional accessories including neck and arm bracelets, such as those referred to in Xitsonga as *madeha* and *vusenga*.

Again during the early 1800s the Malulekes were accompanied by a group of Vhavenda and Bapedi traders from the Limpopo region en-route to the Delagoa Bay, which was one of the favourite trading posts of the early Van'wanati. During this meeting, again with the Dutch, the Malulekes traded tin bars which they had acquired from the Vhavenda (Liesegang 1977 cited in Bandama 2013). According to Bandama (2013) these accounts are indicative that the Maluleke often acted as intermediaries between the sailors and the Venda and Pedi groups, and were often negotiators of trade on behalf of the Vhavenda and the Bapedi. The Vatsonga controlled all access to trade on the coast of Delagoa Bay while the Tonga of Inhambane controlled the Inhambane Bay and all other groups had to pay tribute to these people in order to trade in those areas.

The Malenga branch under Maxakadzi, and later his son Dlamani with his sub-chiefs (*tihosana*) Phele, Nyan'wangi, Xitanda, Xihala, and Nkuri, dominated and subdued most of the area between the Kruger National park and the Zoutpansberg below the Levubu (Rivubye) River during the late 1700s to mid-1800s. After the death of Dlamani and later after the disintegrated influence of the Nyan'wangi, of Xitanda, and also the Xihala of Mayeke, the Nkuri section rose to prominence and led the Xikundu and Makuleke sections into further gains inland. Other Dlamani and Guyu houses, such as Xikole, Huhlwani, and Nkuri of Nkhapuri, extended towards the Ritavi (Klein Letaba), some to the hills of today's Valdezia, Beja and Mutonga near the Zoutpansberg Mountain while some of them were forced to flee towards Malingotse and southern parts of Zimbabwe after 1860. The Makuleke under Hlekani remained and dominated the north where today is the Thulamela region while the Xikundu were sent to conquer the south at Matibe (Dicke 1926). The Dlamani section under Nkuri and later Mhinga managed to take their battles in as far as the Tshitungulu hills (between Valdezia and Tshakhuma) after having defeated many of the Vanyayi and other smaller Venda-speaking groups near the Levubu River (Masumbe 2002).

Mondlane

The Mondlanes have an older N'wanati link with the Maluleke and Makwakwa. The Mondlanes constituted the part of the Van'wanati who also raided in parts of old South Africa in the 1700s and also lived along the Nyampura/Inhampura River (now Limpopo River) before 1700, while parts of the Makwakwa and the Maluleke were still based at N'wanati in southern Mozambique.

The father of Xipenenyani (who ruled during 1889-1898) was Mbingwani/Bingwani Mondlane (who ruled during the period 1860-1889); Mbingwani was the son of Khambani, of Dzovo, of Kuhlambeni, of Nkome, of Mondlane, of N'wanati. Xipenenyani's mother was N'wamaphevene Maqona, and Mbingwani's mother was Nwaxixongi Mandlati. There was a prior disagreement and conflict between the main branch of the Mondlane family and the Makwakwa after Khambani denied for Mahuntsi (the son of Ndindane), to inherit Dzovo's wife after Dzovo passed on (Liesegang 2014b). The Makwakwa however remain in close relationship with the other Mondlane groups in the N'wanati-dominated regions of Mozambique to this day and have a closer bond with them than with the branch of the Maluleke since those groups live closer to each other. However, in modern times small groups of the Mondlanes and Makwakwa can even be found in different parts of South Africa, most especially in the cities. Today most of the recognised chiefs from the Mondlane lineage in Mozambique are from the branch of Khambani (Dzovo), particularly the house of Mbingwani.

Eduardo Mondlane is of the Khambani lineage of Mondlane and would praise himself as the “son of Nwadjahane—also known as Mussengane—, Mussengane son of Magulane, Magulane son of Machecaomu (Maxekahomu) [Maxekahomu was the elder brother of Bingwani],

Machecaomu son of Khambani, Khambani son of Dzowo (Dzovo), Dzovo son of Kuhlambeni, Kuhlambeni son of Nkome, Nkome son of Mondlane, being Mondlane of the lineage of the Nwanati” (Cruz 2022; Reis & Muiuane 1975, p. 13).

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

Van'wanati are reported to have played a significant role in trade with the old Rozvi or Venda states, Mapungubwe, the Portuguese, the Dutch, and Asian traders. They have also helped to protect the bay area around the historic Copi (Chopi) trading posts and around the Tonga posts in present-day Mozambique, securing trade opportunities for the Vatsonga inland (Maluleke 2021). Together with the Varhonga and Valoyi they formed some of the most powerful armies of the Vatsonga nearer to the Mozambican coast, viewed by some as being “unassimilated and inassimilable” among the Chopi (Mathebula 2013, p.74). The Vacopi are known to have been fierce in battle and non-reluctant to take on an invader.

According to Chief Rodriguez Mapai (2011 cited in Bandama 2013), the Van'wanati were intermediaries in iron, pottery, and cloth trade between the local people (“Bantu”) groups and the Eurasian traders during the 1700s. This enabled other groups to gain access to resources such as maize, fabric, and copper, amongst other things that enabled such groups to develop thriving communities. Trade with the outside world however was not just limited to the Vatsonga, as other ethnic groups also did much of their own trading.

In 1969 Adolf Sunduza II Mhinga led the Vatsonga and Amashangane traditional authorities to preserve their independence and subsequently prevented an assimilation of the Tsonga language group and culture by the surrounding Venda, Northern Sotho, and Swati homelands. The Tsonga and

Shangaan chiefs complied with Mhinga's call to form a united regional authority and thus the National Party finally recognised the people as a cultural unity with their own written and spoken language and a set of unique traditional practices. The creation of the Malamulele regional authority and the establishment of Gazankulu is what ultimately united the Tsonga and Shangaan people in South Africa and this became the main driving force behind the preservation and recognition of the Xitsonga language and nation on the national and international stage.

The late 1900s saw the beginning of a bigger revolution in Mozambique when the FRELIMO under Eduardo C. Mondlane (1920–1969) and the ANC rose up to ally with Cuba and the Soviet Union (modern day Russia and other Soviet allied territories) to eventually win the War of Independence against the Portuguese, the English, and the Afrikaners, in Mozambique and South Africa respectively (De Sousa Ferreira & Davidson 1974; Isaacman & Isaacman 1983). Eduardo Mondlane, having studied in the Tsonga-dominated area of Lemana College near Elim in Limpopo, went on to become the founding president of FRELIMO in Mozambique.

The Makuleke branch, which is a subsection of the larger N'wanati lineage, today plays a significant role in the Makuleke Contractual Park within the Kruger National Park. The Makuleke people were returned the land in 1998 by the Land Claims Court after having filed a land restitution claim that has come to be regarded as the first successful claim of land within a conservation area in southern Africa (Maluleke n.d.). Representatives from the Makuleke royal house negotiated the transfer of the land; however, since the land is a conservation area, they agreed not to settle on the land but to continue using it for conservation and ecological purposes. They, in partnership with South African National Parks (SANParks) resorted to offering the Makuleke people membership rights to the conservation and sustainability of the Makuleke area, which is an area within the Kruger National Park richest in bird life species, wild animals, and ancient enclaves. The Makuleke community continues to show a great leadership role in the

sustainability of the Makuleke Transfrontier Park. Phela ruled at old Makuleke under the leadership of Dlamani, and his son Makuleke Hlekani became the leader of old Makuleke territory during the time of Nkuri. Nkuri the son of Dlamani left the land under the control of Makuleke who was installed to oversee trade and security in the region.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

Dlamani (Maluleke)	Kuhlambeni (Mondlani)	Kuhlambeni (Mondlani)	Makumbani (Mondlani)
Xilungwa II Mhinga Adolf Sunduza II Mhinga (b. 1914- 1992) Tsvuula Maxawu Mhinga (b. 1872-1949) Nkhavi Mhinga Sunduza Mhinga Mhinga (d. 1883) Xitanda – *Nkuri		Xipenenyani (b. 1840s r. 1889- 1905) – sibling: Tlongonyani Mbingwana (r.1850-1889) – sibling: Nkari - father of Mabote and Simbini) Khambani (b. 1775 r. 1810- 1850) 	
	Xivambu (b. 1860-1919) Magulani – sibling: Mbhatani Maxekahomu (b. 1805-1880) Khambani (b. 1775 r. 1810- 1850)		Panda Magandane Mahuntsi (b. 1835-1880) Ndindani

 Dlhamani (Ximambani)	 Dzovo (b. late 1700s r. 1810- 1825)	Dzovo (b. late 1700s r. 1810- 1825)	Xilatani
 Muswana – *Maxakadzi (early-1700s)	 Kuhlambeni (c. middle-1700s)	 Kuhlambeni (c. middle-1700s)	 Makwakwa
 Malenga (Maluleke)	 Nkome/Malate (r. early 1700s – late 1700s)	 Nkome/Malate (r. early 1700s – late 1700s)	 Makumbani (c. middle-1700s)
 N'wanati (Gunyule) (c. middle- 1600s)	 Mondlane	 Mondlane	 Nkome/Malate (r. early 1700s – late 1700s)
 Xixangaxile (Xakadza/Xiva) (late-1500s)	 N'wanati (Gunyule) (c. middle- 1600s)	 N'wanati (Gunyule) (c. middle- 1600s)	 Mondlane
 Ntemelapi	 Xixangaxile (Xakadza/Xiva) (late-1500s)	 Xixangaxile (Xakadza/Xiva) (late-1500s)	 N'wanati (Gunyule) (c. middle-1600s)
 Pajila	 Ntemelapi	 Ntemelapi	 Xixangaxile (Xakadza/Xiva) (late-1500s)
	 Pajila	 Pajila	 Ntemelapi
			 Pajila

Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Chavani (Chabane)
Dumela
Hasani
Hlaneke
Huhlwani
Khambane
Mabobo
Mabote
Magomani
Mahungu (Mahungo)
Mahange
Majeje
Makasela
Makhuvele

Makumeke
Makwakwa
Maluleke (Maluleka, Maluleque, Makuleke)
Manghena
Mangolele
Manyetwe
Mapai
Maphophe
Masangu
Matsilele
Mdludlu
Mhinga
Mkhacani
Mkhwanazi
Mondlani
Mpharhuki
Msengi
Mtsetweni
Muhunguti
Mulamula

Mutuvatuva
Muyexe
Ndlala
Nghezimani
Nkome
Nkuri
Nsimbhini (Simbine)
Ntimbani/Ntimba
Ntsanwisi
Panda
Phahlela
Rhangani
Rusenga
Salani
Tlakula
Tsuvuka
Xifaxani
Xigalo
Xihahela
Xihimu

Xikhumba
Xikole
Xikundu (Shikundu)
Xirima
Xivambu (Shivambu)
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

Hi Van'wanati, hi va dyi va bhangu hina;

Hi va ka nkala na visi bya yona;

Va ka tindlopfu a ti luvani, ti luvana hi minxakwa;

Va ka matoto ya tihuku ya lema rihlelo;

Hi va ka xinyela-babeni hina;

Hi va ka Xixangaxile xi kendza maxexo; Ntemelapi! Pajila!

Va ka betsa ra matsala-tsala;

Va mafula hi xivuri hi tshika nyundzu;

Va ka timamba a ti luvani, ti luvana hi mincila;

Gunyule! Mn'wanati!

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) given by Shikundu H.F. for Chief Hasani John Shikundu (1990 cited in Malungana 1994, p. 179):

*“Loyi i Hasani John Shikundu;
I n'wana Jim Chavani;
Wa Hlengani;
Wa Hanyani;
Wa Shikundu;
Wa Mayeke;
Wa Ncelwa;
Wa Malenga;
Wa Xikandza-xivi;
Wa Xinyela-babeni;
Wa macimba ya tihuku yo lema rihlelo;
Xendza-valungo;
Hi ku MAYEKEE!
Va ku M'N'WANATI!!”*

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) of the Manyika branch of the Makwakwa:

*“Hi va ka Manyika hi mbita hi chava ku phama hi nga ta soriwa.
Hi Van'wanati lavo phatluka hi ku nandika ka Makwakwa u ku ya tshanile
ma lo do do do!*

Makwakwa, Mondlane, Maluleke, Mdludlu

Wa ku ba xifukwani mbengendeee!

Phandla Vatonga! Phandla mazinja!"

HISTORY OF THE VABILA

Introduction

Vabila are named after their ancient land at Bileni and after an ancestor also named Bila. Amongst the Vabila in South Africa you find the main houses of Mashimbye, Bila, and Bilankulu. Many of the Vabila in Mozambique, according to oral traditions and recorded history, identify as part of the Valenge (Earthy 1933), while many of them today constitute parts of the Tonga of Inhambane and the Xitswa-speaking communities of Vilanculos. Vabila commonly praise themselves as “*Mhlahlandlela*” and are perhaps closest related to the Van’wanati, Varhonga, Vakhosa, Vadjonga and older groups of the Vacopi. They are not directly of Nguni or Ngoni origin but of an ancestral group known in old history and literature as the Embo and the oldest of the lineage of the Vilankulu is known to have been a Mambo king (Earthy 1933).

Many of the Vabila in Mozambique speak Xitswa, some of them Xicopi, Xilenge, and even Gitonga. In South Africa they speak Xitsonga or a related dialect based on their demographics and in Bileni there are few who speak an old dialect that has come to be known as Xibila. The most famous surname of the Vabila in South Africa is Mashimbye.

As for the name Vilankulu, in Mozambique there are three groups who go by this name: one group living in a large territory above Inhambane known as Vilanculos, another group of the Vilankulu is found in Chopi territory and consider themselves Vacopi or Valenge (Earthy 1933), and the last group is found in Bileni near the Limpopo River.

Earliest Traces

The Vabila were already well established in southern Mozambique when it was overrun by Soshangane and other Ngoni groups during the 1820s. Separate factions of the Ndwandwe branch from Zwide's fallen kingdom fought for a new home and raided throughout Bileni, the Sofala hinterlands and the Hlengwe, Teve and Manyika kingdoms. The Bila have formed part of the tribes of Bileni, the Chopi, Lenge and Tonga of Inhambane even in the 1700s. They appear to have had a very close affinity to the Sono and Khosa, which seems have been disrupted over the past years.

The Vilankulu consider themselves originally part of the Vamhandla and Vantama groups who are thought to originate from a Mambo king, while at the same time, together with the Nkumbe, they are believed to be part of the oldest nucleus of the Embo or ancient groups of the Mambo (Earthy 1933, p. 4). The Vilankulu association with the Vamhandla gives strong indications of their older affinity with the Sono/Hlungwani.

In southern Mozambique the Vilankulu were one of the old kingdoms of Vutonga (Otongwe) and one of their old lineage names can be seen on a 1505-1760 map as 'Mocumbe' located in the northern part of the Limpopo River (Hall 1909, p. 28-30). In pre-colonial times the Embo migrated out of Kenya and settled in the countries known today as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and South Africa in KwaZulu Natal. The 1505-1760 map by Hall (1909, p. 28-30) actually identifies the entire area of KwaZulu Natal as 'EMBO (Natal)'.

When the Valoyi of Gwambe first settled near Inhambane the Vilankulu were already established along the coast of southern Mozambique (Junod 1927). The Vabila formed some of the earliest tribes of the Tsonga and Tswa-speaking groups of Mozambique in addition to the Chopi, Tswa, Bi-Tonga, Ronga, and Lenge. The Valoyi upon arriving defeated some groups of the Vilankulu (such as the Mrori and Nkumbe). The region conquered by the

Gwambe group does however constitute a small part of the total area of the Vilankulu which extends to the north at the Sabi River. The larger part of Vilanculos, Inhambane, and the remaining chiefdom of Nkumbe above Inharrime River remained unconquered (Webster 1976).

The Bila lineage knows themselves as the descendants of Mlangeni. They are a large group and have a very early period of settlement in southern Africa, although a lot of the people's history has not been properly documented. The Vilankulu branch of the Bila, like other Vatsonga, practiced the ancient scarification customs and many other traditions that the Tsonga practiced (Junod 1927), which gives indications of their early relationship with other Vatsonga and the Xitsonga customs and traditions. The Bila section from the south at Bileni joined the larger Vilankulu group near Inhambane during the 1700s at the time of large-scale invasion from groups including the Valoyi, Vahlengwe, and the Vahlave.

Southern Africa Migrations

The Vatsonga of Bila (Vabila) in South Africa are mostly found within the Vhembe District of Limpopo, through to Giyani and southern Mozambique. They are the people of Bileni located in southern Mozambique and they were neighbours to the Vacopi and Khosa communities into the 1700s. Liesegang (2014a, p. 18) states that the Bila or Vilankulu lost their territory in the Limpopo valley (lower Limpopo River), at Bileni, in around 1750 and moved nearer to Inhambane.

The Vahlengwe coming in from the south in the beginning of the 1700s forced some of the Vabila away from the south near the Limpopo River and into the north towards the modern places of Vilanculos and Massinga.

The Bilankulu history shows a rapid movement during the time of Hlengwe raids into Bileni and areas closer to the Indian Ocean. This movement of the Bila and Bilankulu lineages further north indicates their earlier arrival than the Hlengwe of Chauke who came in from the south into the areas surrounding Bileni. The Bilankulu settlement above Inhambane Bay prevented further advancements of the Chauke into the north (Liesegang 2014a).

The Bilankulu attacked some of the Tonga around Inhambane at around 1770 and settled in what is now their Vilanculos area, effectively defeating some of the Tonga around Vilanculos. Liesegang (2014a) mentions the presence of southern clan names such as Chirindza (from Manhiça in the south), Gwambe (from Inharrime) among the Vilankulu. Various groups unrelated to the Vabila established themselves in Chopiland in the 1700s.

Despite the constant invasions and attacks, the Vabila have not lost their Tsonga identity and have as well largely maintained their peculiar dialect (Mathebula *et al.* 2007). The Vilankulu living at Vilanculos still speak a particular Tsonga dialect that is closer to Xitswa. After the fall of the Gaza Lineage State, a lot of the remaining Vabila who were subjugated however settled with the group under the leadership of Mpisane in Bushbuckridge in the beginning of the 1900s while others had settled in different parts of the Limpopo province from earlier times.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

Vamhandla (Vilankulu)	Vantama (Vilankulu)
N'wavumbulane – Xiluvanyana – Kovelane Nyapondzo	Vilankulu

<p> </p> <p>Khambanyane</p> <p> </p> <p>Xiluvane</p> <p> </p> <p>Maphamu</p> <p> </p> <p>Nyapondzo</p> <p> </p> <p>Vilankulu</p> <p> </p> <p>Xitsumbuli</p>	<p>Matsemane</p> <p> </p> <p>Mukumbe</p> <p> </p> <p>Musika</p> <p> </p> <p>Nzunwe</p> <p> </p> <p>Nyankungwane</p> <p> </p> <p>Rhee Mambo</p>
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Bila
<p>Machume</p> <p> </p> <p>Masiya/Masiye II</p> <p> </p> <p>Bode (1800s)</p> <p> </p> <p>Pondolo</p> <p> </p> <p>Mahahalati</p> <p> </p> <p>Mbeva</p> <p> </p> <p>Mashimbye – *Bila</p> <p> </p> <p>Masiya/Masiye I</p>

Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Bila
Bilankulu
Comana
Fulani
Henhla
Mahluza
Malatji
Malungwana
Masiya
Mathonsi
Mavaso (Mabaso)
Mawolele
Maximbyi
Maxengete

Mbeva
Mukanani
Musika
Muthemba
Mrori
Ndheve
Ndzhevo
Ntama
Vilankulu
Xikonela
Xilambu
Xisano
Xituvana
Yingwana
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry
(Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) of the Bila tribe, cited from Wakahina.co.za
(2016):

*“Bila, Mashimbye, Langeni
Ri pela ri nga byeriwanga hi munhu
Mhlahla ndlela”*

HISTORY OF THE VAKHOSA

Introduction

Vakhosa are a section of the Vadzonga (Vadjonga) who established an independent tribe in old Khoseni territory in southern Mozambique. The Vakhosa were also known as Vambayi. Some of the records of the early 1900s indicate that the Vambayi appear to descend from the Sotho and Swazi who intermarried with early groups of the Tsonga (Junod 1905, p. 236). The remaining main groups of the Mbayi are identified as the Balauti and the Mbayi proper who are closer in similarity to the Swazi.

It is reasonable cause to indicate that African groups including, among others, the Tsonga, Nguni, and Sotho often immersed themselves into the distinct culture and language of their neighbours in order to strengthen the bond between the neighbouring nations, which was not always an act motivated by the ideals of conquest and superiority but one of unification and familiarity. To the ancient Africans it was a way to establish alliances and to reduce tribalism. This appears to have been the case with groups of the Mbayi and the Tsonga-speaking groups who are identified as the Vadzonga. It is important to note however that the history of Vakhosa in southern Africa predates the available history about the Mbayi and Swazi link and this indicates an older point of origin for the Vakhosa, with the oldest names remembered in the lineage (Mavona, Ripanga, Khosa) pointing to very early Xitsonga-speaking people of the late 1500s to 1600s. The Vakhosa have essentially been incorporated into various chiefdoms over the years and they can be found in South Africa and Mozambique as part of various Tsonga clans. Their older history in records indicates they could have

very well given rise to many modern groups, for example some of the Mbayi could be descended from these people and not the other way around.

Their capital in southern Mozambique was known locally as Khoseni which was ruled by the early chiefs of the Khosa in early times. The Vakhosa are still today found in many parts of Magude with different branches of the group variously found in places such as Timangweni, Makuvulani, Nyongane, and Shisangwana. Others are found at the areas of Matendeni in the town of Magude, as well as Bileni and other areas nearer to the Indian Ocean.

Earliest Traces

The Khosa are a large group, and the earliest written sources mentioning them date back to the 16th century (Liesegang 2014d). There are also records of back in 1723 when they were mentioned as "Machimbile Cosse" and living on the north bank of the Nkomati/Incomati River (Liesegang 2014d). Oral history collected by Earthy (1933) among some groups of the Masiye, who mentioned their ancestors to have stayed in Khoseni, indicates that the Khosa could be related to the Vilankulu and that both these groups originate from the Mambos before they became some of the first to assimilate into the Tsonga language and culture. It is then believed that Khosa is the earliest remembered forefather who settled his people in today's Khoseni in southern Mozambique.

It is mentioned in Junod (1912, p. 24) that some of the earliest lineages that were already located in the Khoseni country in southern Mozambique before the large-scale arrival of these groups from the south were the Xivambu and the Ntimba. In the Magude area today there are different Khosa groups, with one of them centered around the Messano area near Masiya. There are also other groups related to the Khosa in the Limpopo

River valley and other distant areas. Earthy (1933) mentions some groups who claimed an origin from the Khoseni country in Mozambique as having shared some close affinity with groups of the Vilankulu from very early times. Among the Valenge near the Indian Ocean, groups of the Vilankulu were found to be earlier settlers than the N'wamusi Masiye. These N'wamusi Masiye appear to have a history of migration and settlement that is similar to groups of the Khosa.

Near Masiya/Macia, there were three Khosa groups called Khosa Xikhotana, Chambale, and Masiye, living in the valleys of Mazimhlope and Limpopo rivers (Liesegang 2014d). There is another group linked to a person named Nyoko, which settled in the Masiyeni area northeast of Xai-Xai. These Khosa-Nyoko people expanded north and northeast, reaching the area between Xai-Xai and Inhambane. They are believed to be associated with other groups like the Xilundu, Nyarime (Inharrime), Nyanombe, Nyareluka, and possibly the Chisano in the Inharrime area near the Thovela group of Zavala (Liesegang 2014d). Many of these groups have a history of migration and conquest, but much of this early information has not been recorded properly in the available literature.

When the Ndwandwe forces overran Mozambique in the 1820s, Vakhosa were already long established in the Khoseni and 'Dzonga' district of Magude in southern Mozambique. They are known to have shared the closest proximity with the Vaxika, Varhonga, Vaxingwedzi, and the other Vadzonga groups from the now South African territory. In southern Mozambique their first neighbours were the Bila, Lenge, N'wanati, and Tembe. The Vambayi themselves, who are believed to be the point of departure of Vakhosa, are some of the earliest northern-Sotho and Swati groups and appear to be closely related to the Mapulana and the old Ronga-speaking people who spawned many of the tribes along the Lubombo mountains and near Swaziland. Junod (1912, p. 18) notes that the Khosa tribe living in Lourenço Marques is called Bakalanga, but also mentions that the proper Kalanga are in Zimbabwe. The Khosa are regularly discussed in

history books as having a history in Zimbabwe, though it seems they have for a long time been a large group with different sections settled in different parts of southern Africa.

Ripanga

Ripanga is one of the earliest leaders of the Vakhosa and is believed to be the son and heir of Khosa. He raised the Khosa lineage to prominence and brought into existence the lineages of Movone and Nyoko. The Mavone branch became the leading house and the Nyoko branch became powerful in trade.

Magigwana Khosa

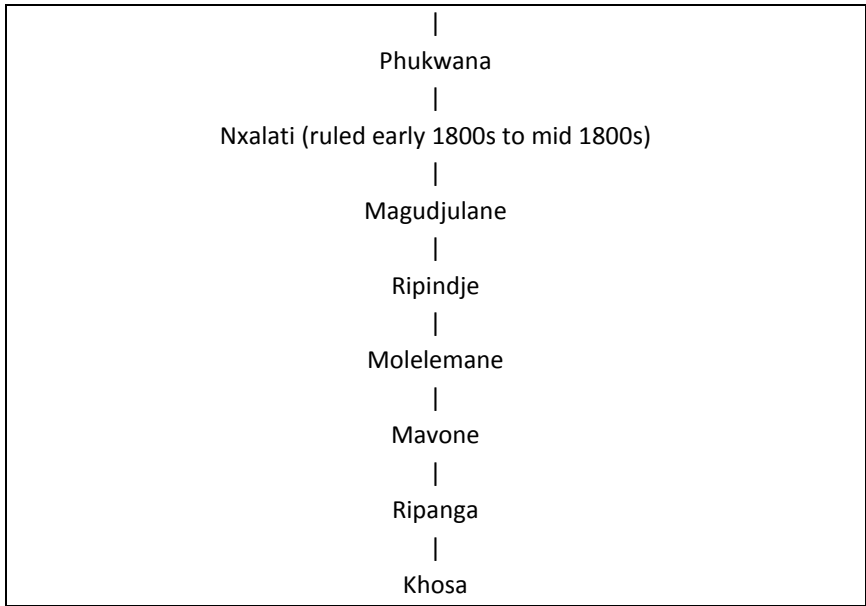
When Nghunghunyani was defeated and captured by the Portuguese in 1895, Magigwana Khosa was the army general who led most of the battles after the Amashangane chiefs had fled to the Bushbuckridge area in South Africa. The Gaza people were abandoned by the Nxumalo chiefs and the supporters of the Gaza rulership were left defenceless against the Portuguese. The Portuguese never really had a hard time defeating the Gaza forces. Prior lenient attempts by the Portuguese were mostly motivated by the desire to maintain peaceful control over trade and to establish political alliances with the Gaza Nguni. In the final wars Magigwana Khosa was one of the few who remained to fight for the people of Gaza until he was captured and killed at a place called Mapulangweni by the Portuguese (Mathebula *et al.* 2007).

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

Most Vakhosa tribes that fled from the Gaza State had established themselves amongst the Vatsonga along the Transvaal and had the courage to lead their people away from the eminent conflict within the State. They successfully led their people away from the frontlines of battle and have played a crucial part in the legacy of the Vakhosa. They have historically been assimilated into various Tsonga groups and other nearby language groups through migration. The Vakhosa of Mozambique today constitutes part of the communities of Khoseni near the south of the Limpopo River where it spits out water (Nyampura) into the Indian Ocean. The area has beautiful scenery and different parts of the land at Khoseni and Magude have been led by traditional leaders of the Khosa.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

Khosa
Malaxwane Xihanyisane Mavhavaza Nxongi Xongele Magudju (died around 1885)



Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Khosa
Macuvana
Magudju

Magudjulane
Mahlawule
Masiya/Masiye
Masuluke
Mavone (Mabone)
Mbhalati
Mbhanyele
Molelemanane
Mphome
Nxalati
Nsumbani
Ntimane
N'wamusi
Nyanombe
Nyarime
Nyarulega
Nyoko
Phukwana
Rikhotso
Ripanga

Ripindje
Rivisi
Xongele
Ubisi
Xikhotana
Xilundu/Chilundu/Guilundu
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) of the Ubisi tribe, cited from Wakahina.co.za (2015):

*“Wena Ubisi-Maguva
Wa Shihangalasa, wa Shiganyisana mika.
Wa pasi (ra manghiza) wa kava bambeni,
Waka va, shimunhu,
Wo pfa- ebambeni nale ka bigiwane-
Hi wena Ubisi Maguva ngceshee-Ubisi!!!!”*

HISTORY OF THE VANDZAWU

Introduction

The Vandzawu (or Vandawu/Vandau) are originally a part of the Ndau ethnic group who are related to the Shona speakers. The Vandzawu who today constitute a part of the Vatsonga were assimilated through language and marriage after fleeing from wars in their old kingdoms, hence a lot of them in South Africa now speak the Xitsonga language. Some of them were conquered by the Gaza Nguni and eventually adopted the Tsonga language as time progressed. Not all Vandzawu recognise as of Tsonga origin since only a small fraction were assimilated after the wars of the 1800s. The majority of the Vandzawu are still found in the central parts of Mozambique and they still speak the Ndau language. This section represents the Vandzawu of South Africa who assimilated into the Xitsonga language and culture.

The name “Vandzawu” is in the Shona language and can be translated to mean “of the lion”. They are the people who ruled with ivory, and were well established in ivory trade. They primarily used ivory as a way of paying their dues and for negotiating marriage terms. The Vandzawu were known for making and keeping treasures such as beads, necklaces, and horns that they made from valuable materials. The Vandzawu can be found mostly in Mozambique and parts of Zimbabwe. They have been living in Mozambique for a very long time and are also quite a large group. They mostly occupy towards central Mozambique and Chipinge in South-eastern Zimbabwe. They have a history with the great kingdoms of Zimbabwe and they settled around Sofala and other areas of Mozambique when they married into the local peoples following the collapse of the Mbire. There are also numbers of

them living in South Africa. They are historically related to the Shona and Vakaranga and they regard themselves as the ancestors of the sea. They are very serious about their culture and are firm believers in totemism. In Zimbabwe they are popular for their expertise in herbs, powders, and traditional healing. Much has been written about the tales and proverbs of the Vandzawu (Boas & Simango 1922).

The Vandzawu have slightly different traditional practices from the Vatsonga of Limpopo and Mozambique, one being that instead of following the traditional way of marriage (*lovola*), the male may first live with his companion and her family in order to offer his help through domestic chores. Melville (1923) has done a lot of extensive research about the traditional marriage rites of the Vandzawu. According to Earthy (2009), the Vandzawu have quite strange customs and rituals, few of which do show similarity with the practices of most of the Vatsonga.

Among the Vandzawu are the Vandanda who love to build their houses under trees or in a place densely populated by trees; the Maxanga/Machanga who occupied land closer to the Indian ocean on the coast of Mozambique; the Magova who were situated by the valley of the Buzi river; and Vatomboti who were given the name of a grasshopper that loves to eat the leaves of a tobacco tree.

Earliest Traces

According to early works by Henri Phillipe Junod (1977) the Vandawu established themselves as one of the early inhabitants of Mozambique along with the Valenge (Lenge), Vatonga (Nyembane), Vacopi (Chopi), and Vatswa (Tshwa). The life and times of the people during the 1500s to the 1650s is re-visited in '*Matimu ya Vatsonga*' which gives a clearer perspective of the

founding Tsonga tribes. At Mapungubwe the Vandzawu established a large trade operation and often engaged with the Arabs and Portuguese, trading items such as cloths, beads, iron, ivory, herbs and powders, bones, and animal skin.

Vandzawu have historically been located most towards the north of the Sabie River and around the central parts of Mozambique. They originate from the first Shona states and possibly began to settle amongst the Vatsonga after fleeing the Rozwi wars. The collapse of the Mbire Kingdom dispersed a lot of the people, who later established protection alliances towards Mozambique in search for shelter (Maposa, Hlongwana, & Gamira 2010). The other major migrations occurred when Soshangane raided and conquered their land in the 1820s. Like with many of the other clans, some Vandzawu owe their allegiance through intermarriage, for example the Msimango tribe originate from the Swatis, and the Moyana lineage originates from the Ngoni and Gumbi people.

In Mozambique the Vandzawu have established themselves along the Zambezi valley and they can also be found within the eastern parts of Zimbabwe. Earliest interaction with the Shona-speaking Tonga groups of central Mozambique occurred in the Manyika (Manika/Manhica) region.

Southern Africa Migrations

When the Ngoni invaded the Vandzawu territory in the central parts of Mozambique, many of the Vandzawu were taken as prisoners but some of them managed to escape (Earthy 2009). A lot of those who were fortunate managed to settle amongst the Vacopi along the coast. When the Vandzawu were invaded by the Amashangane, they managed to hide (bury) a lot of the treasures they had as they realised they could come back to retrieve them later.

Even after the invasions the Vandzawu managed to sustain their particular mode of operation and they have preserved a lot of their traditions. In the 1800s they were still involved in trade with the Shona of Zimbabwe even trading copper for goods such as ostrich eggs (Bhila 1982, cited in Bandama 2013).

Some tribal houses have been living in South Africa for a long time and can speak the Xitsonga dialect very well. Early migrations into parts of South Africa could have happened after the disintegration of Mapungubwe. One particular Xitsonga-speaking group of the Ndau who have a very old history in South Africa is the Mashava. A lot of the Ndau living in Mozambique are also quite fluent in Portuguese. In South Africa, the Vandzawu settled mostly under the tribal homeland of Malamulele at the Govhu-Mbozi village.

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

Vandzawu are celebrated for having protected a majority of their people during the Ngoni invasions, even though they have been conquered during those battles. They settled amongst the early Vatsonga along the Mozambican coast (Vatonga and Vacopi) and were afforded better security. Their land at Sofala has an old history of occupation and trade as part of the larger Madanda confederacy during the time of the Mutapa Empire. As part of that land of Sofala, the Ndau people formed a part of the natural landscape surrounding the Save and Gorongosa River.

Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Cuma (Chuma)
Dlhakama (Ndlakama)
Gwenzi
Hlatshwayo
Khumbuya
Maboko
Madeiwa
Manyika (Manica, Manyike)
Mapfindlu
Maphosa (Maposa)
Maxava (Mashaba)
Miyambo
Mlambo
Moyani (Moyana)

Moyo
Muceka
Muhlanga (Mhlanga)
Ndlovhu
Nghunyule
Nkovani
Qhivi
Saveka
Sibanda
Sibuyi
Simango
Sithole
Tinarwo
Tivani
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry
(Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) of the Sithole tribe, cited from Wakahina.co.za
(2016):

*“Senyawo! Nkomu, Hlahla, Nsika
Kundlande! Ngonyama!
Hi va ka Muziyothi”*

HISTORY OF THE VARHONGA

Introduction

The Varhonga (or Ronga) are mostly found around northern KwaZulu Natal and Maputo in southern Mozambique. The names Limpopo and Lubombo (Lubombo Mountains) are derived from the Rhonga chief Livombo (or Lebombo/Rivombo) who was the son of Nondwane, an early Ronga king who ruled large parts of the Lubombo Mountains. The Varhonga as identified by Henri Junod in his work 'The Life of a South African Tribe' are not particularly a tribal lineage or specific clan but the name in his book was mostly used to describe the language which he also identified as a dialect withing the Tsonga or "Thonga" group. A lot of the names identified as part of the Varhonga today include many of those that originate from other Tsonga tribes including the Vatembe, Van'wanati, Vakhosa, Vankomati, Vahlengwe, or even groups belonging to the Nguni and Kalanga, which indicates that the Varhonga can today be considered an independent group with clans of different origins much like the Vacopi or even the Vatsonga, though falling within the same ethnic grouping of the Tsonga.

The word "*vurhonga*" itself is very old – it means "East" or "Dawn" in the Xirhonga language, signifying the geographic location of the people. The Tsonga people of Limpopo even have the word "*vurhonga*" in their vocabulary but mostly use it to refer to "the dawn"; for example they will say "*ni ta vuya nivurhonga*" ("I will come back in the break of dawn"). Xirhonga speakers also include the main house of Vatembe, who are situated mostly between Eswatini and the Indian Ocean and to the north of KwaZulu Natal and parts of Mpumalanga in South Africa.

Another point of view is that "Murhonga" was also the name of a king who gave rise to these subsequent branches who today identify as Varhonga,

most likely to be Nyaka whose territory was traversed by the Portuguese who sailed to the coast of Africa where they encountered the Tembe around 1554 (Junod 1912, p. 25).

As Junod (1912, p. 15) also indicates, “Rhonga” or “Ronga” is an alternative spelling for “Thonga (Tonga)” in the eastern dialect of the Ronga language group and is also as much the same thing as “*vutonga*” which in Xilenge bears the same meaning of “east” (Smyth & Matthews 1902). Xirhonga was the eastern dialect that was to a small extent influenced by the Kalanga or Karanga language group during early settlement amongst the Shona and Kalanga groups of Zimbabwe, and some words are also found among the Nguni. Contrary to what has been said about the people in many research papers, Rhonga, Thonga, and Tonga are terms that have been used interchangeably, generally to describe the same cultural and language group with a common history of settlement in southern Mozambique, with small differences in language on the basis of dialect, though claiming to have different origins as with any other ethnic group that has assimilated into a particular cultural identity (Lawton 1967). Names of tribes such as the Mabota and other surnames including Makwakwa, Mpapele, Xirinda, Maxava, and Ngomana, who are listed in some research papers as part of Ronga speaking communities, are also frequent among some groups of the Van’wanati, Vahlengwe, Vandau, and Vaxika respectively, an indication that all groups spoken of in this research have adopted and taken after one another in accordance with their sense of cultural similarity and language. Junod (1912, p. 16) actually adds that “the real Ronga are, I think, the Mpfumo and the Matjolo clans who are settled on the west of the Bay”.

A few of the Varhonga actually carry the main dialect, which may have developed out of the main language groups of the Vatswa, Vatonga and Vakalanga. Slight lexical variations among the Vatsonga have led to the classification of dialects and languages variously referred to as Xitonga, Xissonga, Xicopi, Xidzonga, Xihlanganu, Xibila, Xin’walungu, and Xihlengwe

etc., and all proper dialects are known to be mutually related. The Rhonga language is widely spoken in Mozambique; however, the dialects that side have incorporated a few Portuguese words over the years, while the Rhonga of KwaZulu Natal has incorporated a few Zulu words. Xirhonga as a dialect in old literature is closely related to Xitsonga, Xitswa and Xilenge. Xirhonga and Xitswa have in the past been classified under the Tsonga language group. The Vatsonga tribes that speak a purer form of Xirhonga, however, are the Mpfumo and Matsolo (Matolo/Matjolo) tribes that have managed to preserve the language more eloquently. The Tembe clan (i.e., Matutwen and Mabhudu tribes) who split from the other Varhonga cluster speak a slightly different dialect that has come to be known as Xitembe, and which has incorporated many Zulu words over the years. Within KwaZulu Natal, two Rhonga sub-dialects have been identified, namely Xissonga and Xikonde, however, these sub-dialects are nearer to extinction (Mathebula *et al.* 2007). The name “Giyani” exists in Xirhonga and originates from “*gila*” (*ku gila*) – to do a celebratory war dance, though “*ku giya*” is the tekeza form where the “L” shifts to a ‘Y’, which was the term given to the town of Giyani in the 1900s.

Amongst the Varhonga, you find the Mabota and Mazwayo tribes who were mostly found to the North of Lourenço Marques. The Mazwayo territory extended all the way to the Nkomati and Nondwane. During the 1800s, the Manyisa tribe and Xirinda were to the North of them connecting with the Vahlanganu and Vadzonga of Khoseni (Junod 1912).

Earliest Traces

The earliest oral accounts of Varhonga movements around southern Africa show most activity around the St Lucia Bay from as far back as 1250. Direct contact with the Portuguese appears to have occurred during the late 1400s

to early 1500s (Bandama 2013). Varhonga are known to have developed thriving communities by 1550 (Mathebula *et al.* 2007). The Nyaka and Tembe tribes split from the Rhonga main cluster to form their own kingdoms. The Nyaka could be located to extend from the Delagoa Bay to as far as the St Lucia Bay, and the Tembe from the Delagoa Bay to the Lebombo Mountains. In old maps Nyaka is often written as “Inyak/Inyak Island”.

In 1554 Perestrelo writes about a group of the Varhonga, with such names as Lebombo and Mpfumo, who encountered a Portuguese ship at the coast near Delagoa Bay (Perestrelo 1564). The writings by Perestrelo, which were published later in 1564, are some of the earliest retrievable sources concerning the people of South Africa and serve as a vital source of information about the early history of the Tsonga people. By linking oral tradition with such early writings, it comes to indicate that at least some of the Rhonga-speaking groups may have been a part of the larger Tonga/Thonga group (particularly the Vatembe) and have been migrating between the areas of Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and the Lebombo hills ever since the first Tonga and Kalanga people settled at Mozambique and Zimbabwe in early times.

According to Webster (1986) by 1590 a king known as Nyaka had control over the land from the Delagoa Bay and covering the Lubombo hills and as far south from St Lucia Bay and that the Thonga people were very powerful during those early times. It is also revealed that the kingdom of Nyaka established itself as the most dominant trading kingdom in the region and was the primary trader with Europeans at that time until its power came to be overshadowed by the Tembe.

Southern Africa Migrations

According to some academics, the Rhonga and Tonga groups (sometimes referred to as the *Tekela* group) were the first to establish a kingdom in the area around St. Lucia after arriving along the East-African coast (Skelcher 2003). According to studies in African languages, the Rhonga language developed from the Tonga and Shona languages, which themselves developed from the Niger-Congo group of languages originally from the central Parts of Africa (Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative Plan 2000; Ross 1999; Stuart & Malcolm 1950). The first Rhonga settlements in South Africa seem to have occurred during the middle 1300s with various migratory movements in and out of the Lubombo Mountains and southern Mozambique. Groups such as the Nondwane were already speaking a Ronga dialect long before Ronga and Tsonga were standardised by missionaries.

The Ronga people near the Vilankulu regions In Mozambique share a history with the Bi-Tonga. The fact that groups such as the Masinga of the Vilankulu area have coexisted with the Gitonga-speaking people gives testimony of their close cultural affinity before the the 1800s.

"Uronga of Masinga must also be considered to be of the same Khokha [Tonga] extraction. A.V. Erskine, who visited them in 1874, pointed out the similarity between the Chopi and the Dandas. They used strong six-foot bows and poisoned arrows with iron heads. They lived like the Chopis in a region of large forests, in villages surrounded by extensive cultivated fields. They planted coconut trees, banana trees and sugarcane. They distilled brandy and they used water stored in the trunks of baobab trees. M. Sequeira makes specific references to the culture of the Khokha of the Bazuruto Island and the coast of Vilanculos. The documentation of G, Bivar Lopes has established that this group stretched to the coast of Govuro on the right bank of the Save. The same author discusses their traditional

culture. He called them "Matongas", although he says that they called themselves "Rongas"." – Ferreira 1959, p. 59)

According to Earthy (1933, p. 5) when breakeaway groups of the Nyampfumo first settled amongst the Valenge of southern Mozambique, in the areas between Bileni and Inhambane Bay, they found older groups of the Valenge of lineages such as the Nyaviri, Kwakwi (Makwakwa), and Nyane. It seems that groups of the Nyampfumo N'wamusi and the Khosa were preceded by an earlier migration of groups of the Vilankulu who settled amongst the first groups of the Valenge in the period between 1500-1770. Many of these groups share a lot of similarities with the Rhonga-speaking people of the Lubombo Mountains and Maputo.

Historically the Rhonga-speaking group of the Tembe were allied with the Mthethwa Confederacy in the early 1800s and the two communities have interacted in and around southern Mozambique and the bay areas of KwaZulu Natal possibly since the 1500s (Encyclopedia of World Cultures Supplement 2016; Kloppers 2003, p. 89). Xissonga speakers could also be found as far back as the Pongola valley near the old Ndwandwe settlement in northern KwaZulu Natal (Mathebula *et al.* 2007). The Rhonga-speaking kingdoms had control over the Maputo trade routes and organised movement in and around the bay area known as the Delagoa Bay, importing essentials such as corn and iron. The Mthethwa-Rhonga alliance did not sit well with the expansion plans of Zwide. Dingiswayo, ruler of the Mthethwa, was killed in battle against the Ndwandwe, led by Zwide in 1817 – an event that ultimately found its way into the Nguni wars and scatterings (*Mfecane*) later on from 1819/1820 to around the 1840s. A few of the Mthethwa community joined the Varhonga and are now also found amongst the Vatembe, Hlengwe and Baloyi (Valoyi) settlements. Some Ndwandwe factions later also assimilated into the Vatsonga groups, although through conquest. The remaining Nguni groups in Natal from the Mthethwa and Ndwandwe clans held to the Nguni settlements and began to form under

Shaka Zulu and were known under the Kingdom of amaZulu (note that the Zulu clan itself effectively rose as a small clan at around 1709 through Zulu kaMalandela (1627-1709).

Later during the 1830s the Rhonga group of Mozambique were sharing borders with the newly-established Gaza Kingdom in southern Mozambique. When the Ndwandwe under Soshangane invaded the Tsonga people of Mozambique in the 1820s, it is apparent they had already interacted with the Varhonga and Tembe groups for many years across the Mkhuze River and Hluhluwe in northern Natal. When the Gaza forces attempted to raid the Maputo area, Varhonga tribes such as the Mpfumo and Tembe were initially powerful enough to fend them off and the Varhonga have managed to maintain their authority and independence to this day.

Nhlaruti

Nhlaruti is the great founder of the Mpfumo and Matsolo branches. He was the father of both Mpfumo and Matsolo who are well known amongst the Rhonga-speaking people and other Vatsonga. The Mpfumo and Matsolo became independent from one another and there were often disagreements between the two, however both branches still recognised their family bond.

Nondwane

Nondwane gave rise to the strong tribe of Rivombo from which the Lubombo Mountains are named after. The Rivombo group (sometimes spelled as Lebombo) lived on the hills of the Lubombo Mountains before migrating out into Mozambique. Some parts of the area where they came from were also known as Nkomati and the tribe has a history with the Vankomati group.

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

Varhonga have helped to protect the Vatsonga from hostile invaders and have played a pivotal role in securing trade for both the historic Tongaland and Mthethwa strongholds along the Natal area. The Varhonga were master traders and have played a crucial role in developing one of the largest early industries in iron and copper production across southern Africa. Many of the early tools used by the Vatsonga, such as arrowheads, spears, and iron pottery, were actually made using resources from the Varhonga and territories nearer to Inhambane. The Simunye culture that was affiliated with early groups of Mpumalanga and parts of Eswatini shared close affinity with the Ronga groups from the Lubombo Mountains.

The Varhonga of the KwaZulu Natal coast have largely been able to repel the attacks from the Ngoni Gaza state and mostly did not bother to associate with the Gaza State. They have mostly been able to preserve their independence even though they have been raided in the past. Although the deteriorating influence of the Gaza kingdom was partly to be blamed on the failure in its leadership, many of the Varhonga were some of the armies in

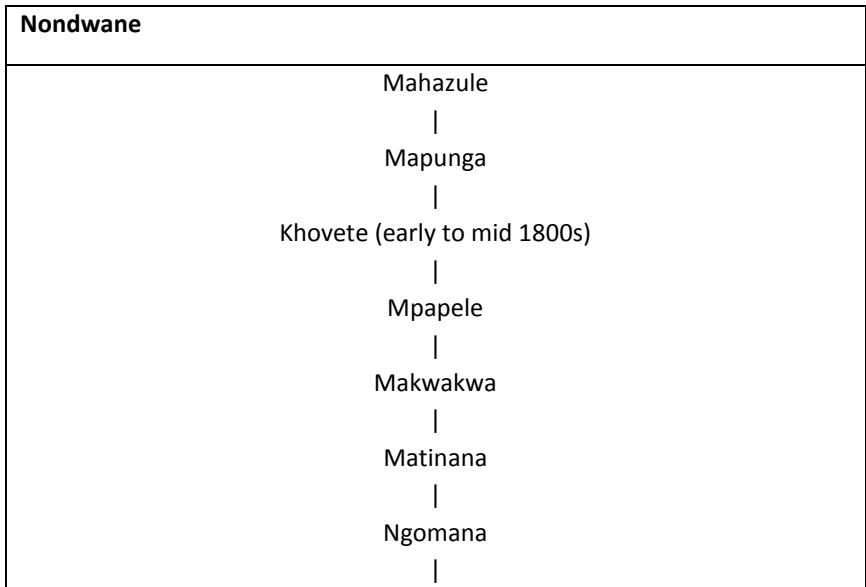
the forefront in the wars against the Gaza soldiers. In the last battles, many of the Varhonga however turned against the Portuguese in a war against the Gaza Nguni and they ransacked some of the Portuguese shops while some of the Varhonga commenced in the battle that later led to the defeat of Ngunghunyane.

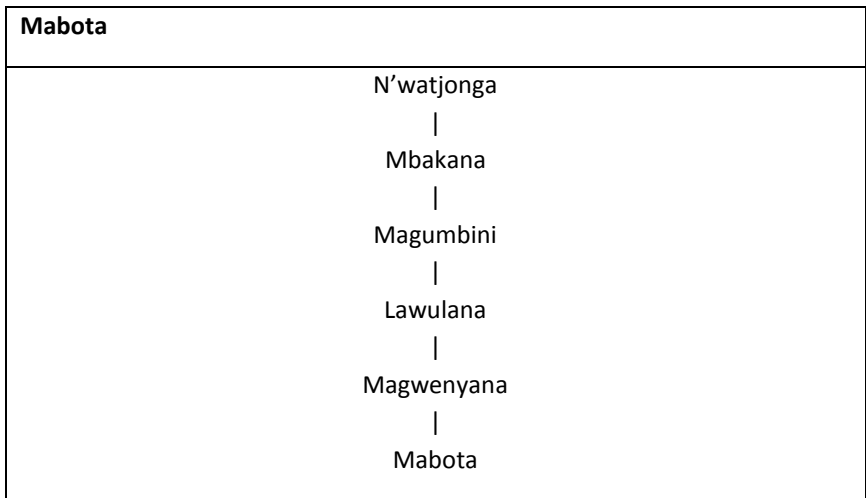
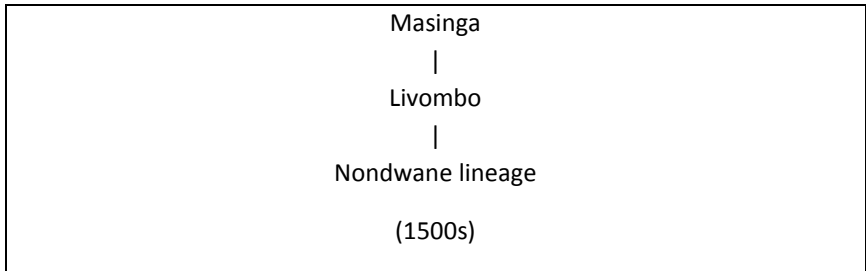
Many of the Varhonga took high positions in the emerging FRELIMO and were instrumental in fighting for their independence against Portuguese colonism. Many of them also joined the rising Umkhonto we Sizwe and were amongst the high ranking officers tasked with training the revolutionary soldiers in the remote parts of southern Mozambique.

After the Varhonga gained the peace to move around and socialize freely within Mozambique, they played an important role in Tsonga history by allowing the Swiss Missionaries to record a lot of the early history of the Tsonga people. After the fall of the Gaza Kingdom in 1895, Henri-Alexandre Junod (1863-1934) began the publication of his works about the Varhonga and their language, namely the *Grammaire Ronga* published in 1896; the *Les Chants et les Contes des Ba-Ronga de la Baie de Delagoa* published in 1897, and one of his most important work, the *Les Ba-Ronga* published in 1898.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

Nhlaruti
N'wamantibyane (late 1800s)
Zihlahla
Hamule





Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Fayi
Hamule
Hasane
Hon'wana
Livombo (Lebombo, Lubombo, Rivombo)
Mabota
Xisin'wana
Mahazule
Mahlangwana
Makaneta
Makwakwa
Manyisa (Manyisi)
Mapungwa
Marime
Maromana
Masinga
Matinyana
Matjolo (Matsolo)
Maxava (Mashaba)
Mazwayo (Mazwaya)

Mpapele
Mpfumo
Mulambu
Ngomana (Ngomana, Ngomana)
Nhlaruti
Nkumba
Nyaka
Tembe
Tsakame
Zihlahla
Xiluvana (Shilubana)
Xirinda (Shirinda)
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) of the Xirinda tribe, cited from Wakahina.co.za (2016):

*“Hi vatukulu va Hlengani,
Hlengani wa Mashila,
Mashila wa Mulamula,
Mulamula wa Xihimu,
Xihimu wa Mafumisi,
Mafumisi wa Murhonga wa ntima wa mavole,
Wa nkuxu wa tihomu.
Va ku rindza nyaka va ku l mavele.
Halala Mahumani wa ku huma ni dyambu!”*

HISTORY OF THE VAXIKA

Introduction

The Vaxika are a small clan and were mostly found along the Nkomati in Mozambique and north-east Nkomati around Mpumalanga. A lot of them today also praise themselves and their ancestors as "Vankomati". The Vaxika are historically a part of the Varhonga group and are related to the Mazwaya section. The Vaxika were a strong and formidable force and are one of the tribes that have played a leading role in the formation of various cultural identities outside of the Tsonga group.

Earliest Traces

Under the leadership of Ngomana, their early king, the Vaxika established themselves along the Mlumuti River. Between 1760 and 1830s the Vaxika fell under the leadership of Majembeni, Ngomana's grandson, and they were found throughout the Middleburg district. Majembani was killed later on in 1825 by Mzilakazi and his army when the Banguni overran their territory.

Southern Africa Migrations

Mgubho, who was one of the leading chiefs of the Vaxika during the 1820s was attacked by the Ndwandwes and he fled to the Tembe country to the

East, where he sought the support of Noziyingili of the Tembe people (Mathebula 2013).

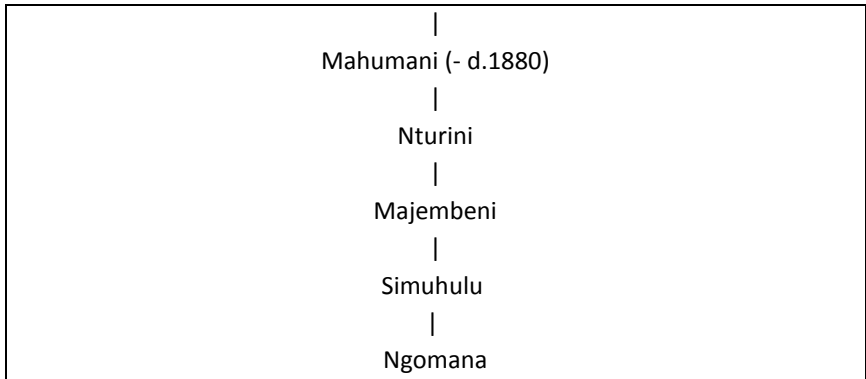
Another head chief of Vaxika, Hoyi, was captured by Nghunghunyane and finally released in 1890 when the Gaza State was nearing its fall (It disintegrated a little later on in 1895 after Nghunghunyani was captured by the Portuguese). When Hoyi returned back, he was given a warm welcome by his *ndhunas* (headmen) and the rest of his tribe (Mathebula 2013).

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

The Vaxika have managed to survive their legacy after their clan had a lot to suffer under the raids of the 1800s, and today they comprise of two independent sections through Mdumane and Mfumfana. The Mdumane section has formed itself as the Siboshwa, and the Mfumfana has established itself as the Lugedlane.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

Ngomana
<div>Ntiyi II</div> <div> </div> <div>Nkapana</div> <div> </div> <div>Hoyi</div> <div> </div> <div>Ntiyi</div>



Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Kubayi
Makavele
Masingi
Mavuza
Mhangana
Mhlangana

Mukhavele (Mkhavele)
Ngomana (Ngomani, Ngomane)
Nkomati
N'walana
Xixongi
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) of the Ngomana tribe of the Mavuza lineage, cited from Wakahina.co.za (2016):

*“Hi va ka xibiha hi masirha ni mapfindla,
Hi lava bihaka hi mahlampfu va kholela ku hanya,
Va ku fa ka nhenha I makwawukwawu,
Hi vankawulana, Va ku dzumba ra ndlopfu,
Va ka matsemela, Hi va ka Mabuza,
Lava humaka mutshwini, va munambu”*

HISTORY OF THE VAHLANGANU

Introduction

The Vahlanganu territory was to the east of the Vadzonga (Hlave, Khosa, Nkuna) and mostly found around the southernmost part the present-day Kruger National Park. They shared boundaries with the Makuleke, Nkuri, Magoda, and Valoyi who were to be found in the north during the 1700s. Vahlanganu could however be found around the Nkomati and Sabie rivers as well, and stretching out all the way into parts of northern Eswatini. Vahlanganu are closest related to Varhonga, Vatembe and the larger Tonga cluster of pre-colonial African tribes and established their state from very early times.

The Vahlanganu group of the Mkhari are closely related to the people of Nkumbe, who do not consider themselves Vahlanganu at all but are today part of the Chopi community in southern Mozambique. Some of the Mnisi consider themselves Nguni while others maintain they descend from the Embo. The N'wamba, on the other hand, have their history in old records indicating their relation to the old Rhonga groups of the Lubombo mountains. Various groups therefore appear to have assimilated into this settlement group known as Hlanganu. Despite this, Junod (1912, p. 17) indicates that the Vahlanganu group is the smallest of the different Tsonga groups that he identified.

Earliest Traces

According to Hammond-Tooke (1911 cited in Bandama 2013) Vasco da Gamma came across a group of the Vahlanganu at the mouth of the

Limpopo River (Nyampura) in 1498. The area at the time was known as *Rio de Cobre* or “the Copper River” to the Portuguese. The Hlanganu have shared territorial borders with the Van’wanati near Xai-Xai (Junod 1912, p. 17), and the Varhonga and Tembe along the coast of southern Mozambique from the 1400s. They are among some of the first Vatsonga to have settled in the area along the coast of Mozambique and appear to be closest related to the Rhonga-speaking cluster of lineages or even the Tembe groups of KwaZulu Natal. Some of the Vahlanganu also ruled the area now known as the iSimangaliso Wetland Park from the 1600s. The area is rich in wildlife species and has been declared a world heritage site. The diversity in wild animals within this area gives evidence to the fact that the Vahlanganu were masters at surviving in wild terrain. The area has had wild animals roaming the territory for centuries, such as rhinos, buffalo, elephants, leopards, etc. Their territory also included the interior of Mpumalanga within the modern-day Manyeleti Game Reserve. The Ngomane, Mpfumu, Rivombo were close neighbors of the Vahlanganu and these groups were documented in the Libombo areas near Eswatini in 1554 (Junod 1912; Hammond-Tooke 1911).

Groups of the Vatembe were situated close to the Vahlanganu; they were very close neighbours. The iSimangaliso Wetland Park and Kosi Bay are some of the nearer tourist attractions today that are known to have a history with the Hlanganu and the Tembe. The Vahlanganu were forcefully relocated out of their territory by the British who designated the area as falling within their colonial sphere in 1895. These Vatsonga were given back a small part of the land to the North of the park, while the South was given to those who are now part of the Zulu-speaking community.

Southern Africa Migrations

By the 1800s, the Vahlanganu were still major players in trade amongst the Vatsonga, even acting as suppliers of copper acquired from the Vhavenda of Limpopo (Hammond-Tooke 1911; Bandama 2013). Vahlanganu were fewer than other Vatsonga groups during the late 1800s and early 1900s. At that time settlement in South Africa flowed into the Transvaal and they shared borders with the Bapedi and Baswati or the Vambayi. Their dialect was very similar to that of the Vadzonga region (Hlave, Khosa, Nkuna) who also lived close by (Junod 1912).

The N'wamba and Mabila tribes were also found within the Vahlanganu area. Vahlanganu were commercial travellers, and had the famous saying "*Va ku hlomula fumu va tlhava misava*" or "Those who draw their assagai and stick it into the ground". This means that the Vahlanganu were not much fighters or raiders and they would much rather avoid conflict. If they were travelling, they would rather pay tribute to be let through than to draw arms (Junod 1913). Vahlanganu were known as "*Vaxavi va ndlela*" or "Buyers of the road", which refers to the ancient act of paying tribute to have safe passage through a territory.

Together with the Hoxani of Nkuna and the Khosa, the Mnisi of Vahlanganu constituted parts of the Bushbuckridge area. During the 1890s when Nghunghunyani was defeated and captured by the Portuguese, the Hoxani were ruled by N'wambhatini; the Khosa were ruled by Njonjela; and the Vahlanganu were ruled by Magwagwaza. When Nghunghunyani's tribe fled to South Africa, they did not receive much support from these local chiefs in terms of royal appendage. Mpisane and the other Ndwandwe generals migrated from Mozambique during this time and they did not attempt to seek support from the local Tsonga chiefs as they recognised their

independence (Mathebula *et al.* 2007). Parts of history show that the majority of Vatsonga tribal leaders in South Africa were independent from the Gaza Lineage State and many of them seem to have found it in their favour when the Gaza State collapsed (Mathebula 2013).

The Vahlanganu of Mnisi, like the Makuleke community off to the north of them, were forcefully removed from their land by the colonial government. Today the majority of their land is a conservation area with protected wildlife. This movement and resettlement led to further integration with other Vatsonga clans within the Limpopo.

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

Like with many old groups of the Tsonga, the Vahlanganu were intermediaries in copper and tin trade between Eurasian traders and other groups within the Limpopo such as the Vhavenda and Bapedi. The Vahlanganu had been active in copper trade from as early as the 1500s and had control over some of the coastal areas near the Indian Ocean (Hammond-Tooke 1911).

Vahlanganu leading royal houses were amongst the ruling confederation of clans to the West across the Limpopo River during the wars against the Gaza State. The leading groups in South Africa were comprised of various independent clans that led the major resistance against the Gaza State and the Boers and comprised mostly of some of the royal houses of Vahlengwe of Xigombe, Vahlave, Valoyi, Van'wanati, Vankomati, Vaxingwedzi, Vahlanganu, Vaxika, and other small tribes individually. Many of these shared close political ties with the newly-formed Xipilongo (Spelonken) region (written in old history as “Magwamba”) that was under João Albasini after 1852.

The Vahlanganu under Chief Mnisi successfully won a land claim for the Manyeleti Game Reserve after their people were forcefully removed from the area by the British. They were relocated to Bushbuckridge and had lost their ancient abode. The Manyeleti Game Reserve is about 22750 hectares and is situated adjacent to the Kruger National Park. The Manyeleti Game Reserve is currently managed by the Vahlanganu of Mnisi, who are showing their ability in managing the area.

The Mukhari lineage was one of the Tsonga groups to lead and accommodate some of the refugees who fled the Mozambican wars after 1830. In recent times the tribal authority of Njhakanjhaka in association with local government leads many parts of the Hlanganani region, which allowed for the Tsonga and Venda to live in peace in the same area. "Nhlanganu" and "Hlanganani" both refer to "unity" or to "unite". The traditional leadership status of leaders who settled in the Zoutpansberg region of Spelonken, such as Njhakanjhaka, Huhlwani, and the nearby Venda among others, had previously been undermined by the native commissioner João Albasini and the Spelonken government under the Boers who used many of them in expeditions under the guise of "independent headmen".

The larger Tsonga-speaking group in Bushbuckridge and near the Kruger National Park, like the Mhinga, Xikundu, Xigalo, N'wamitwa, Makhuva, Khosa, Mnisi, Nkuna and many others, were sometimes raided by Albasini for refusing to be incorporated into his army but they all retained their independence and never formed part of Albasini's headmen. These lineages had their native locations even in the mid-to-late 1800s and into the year 1935 when they were still regarded as the main chiefs (Van Warmelo 1935). The establishment of Gazankulu did in part play a role in the formation and recognition of the senior traditional leadership status of the Mukhari lineage in the late 1900s.

The Vatsonga cultural Village was established in the western Hlanganani district in the Limpopo Province and served to preserve the culture of the Tsonga people. The project in its initial stages received support from the traditional leadership of Njhakanjhaka and some of the local people found near the Lemana College, Mutonga, Shirley and Elim, and was seen as a stepping stone for the construction of a small museum to preserve the Tsonga culture and traditional arts.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

N'wamba	Mnisi	Mukhari
N'wangundjuwana Mudlayi Mangoro Nkolele Malengana Sindjini Rihati Kopo-N'wamba	Magwagwaza (middle 1800s) Mabana Fungana Machave Dzombo Malwana Ntselele Mnisi	Njhakanjhaka (mid 1800s - 1898) Xinguwa Madyelakufa Nkandlweni Xilumanghotse Mukhari (Xihlomulafumu)

Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs):

Chamango
Chavangu
Chavani
Lamula
Maceke
Mafumo
Malwani
Manyeleti
Masingi
Mavila
Mhelembe
Mueche
Mukhari (Mkhari)
Mukhombo

Munisi (Mnisi)
Nhlayisi
N'wamba
Vhukeya
Xilumani
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry of the Mkhari (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) cited from Wakahina.co.za (2016):

“Xilumani-mintsandza (madzandza)-ngwenyeni, xisaka-xa-mipfi ma-ala ku pfukiwa. Shilumani, Mukhari!

Mukhari, wa Xigume xikulu xa Nkandlweni, hi va ka Xilumana, wa muntsandza-a-ngwenyeni, hi Vahlanganu, hi va nhlomula fumu hi rhanga ndlela, hi vadyi va makhongoloti ni timpfani.

Njakanjaka, wa Xinguwa, wa Madyelakufa, wa Nkandlweni, wa Xilumangotse, wa xihlumulafumu-xirhanga-ndlela, wa xisaka xa mimpfi a xi teli ku fuma xi tela vurhena.”

HISTORY OF THE VALOYI

Introduction

Valoyi (Baloyi) are the clan from the North (*N'walungu*). Some sections, for example the Mavila below Inhambane in Mozambique, appear to have been in alliance with groups of the Van'wanati and Vilankulu after the Mavila first settled near the Limpopo River. The Valoyi as part of the Vanyayi (Nyai of the Soko totem) are found to have a history with many of the northern clans of South Africa, particularly the Lobedu and some of the Venda groups from the disintegrated Rozwi kingdom. They have been living side-by-side with the Varhonga, Vabila, and Van'wanati (Maluleke) for a long time in Mozambique and praise themselves as *Vakalanga* (northerners) and as part of the Vharozwi.

After settling towards the northern parts of the Limpopo River, below the Van'wanati of the Maluleke section, the Valoyi were also known as the *va N'walungu* (North group) to Junod, or those inland considered part of the *Magwamba* or *Makwapa* to the Venda, Pedi, and missionaries of the likes of Henri Berthoud, Paul Berthoud, and Ernest Creux. Their clan structure and tribal authority as Valoyi is also believed to be based on kinship (Mathebula 2018), although there are some who are part of the Valoyi through assimilation and settlement. They are a large clan and they were even incorporated into the Vacopi (archers) and played a role in protecting Vatsonga clans from hostile invaders such as the Ngoni, the Boers, and the Portuguese on different occasions. Amongst the Valoyi you also find the Vanyayi who many of them also refer to themselves as *Vakalanga* or who identify with Karanga origins. They make up the largest part of the Vatsonga together with the Vahlengwe, Van'wanati, Vatswa, Varhonga, and Vadzonga.

According to Mathebula *et al.* (2007) one particular famous Vacopi group from the Valoyi clan is the Mavila. The Mavila, settling in Chopiland in the early period of the 1700s, are said to have paid homage to the Nkome branch of the Mondlane and also to one group of the Vilankulu before they became independent (Ferreira 1975, p. 22). Oral traditions of the Mbandze Mavila also confirm that the group did come into that region and settled among the Mondlane and Vilankulu who were found in the area. Groups of the Valoyi have contributed a lot not only to the Vatsonga but to other groups as well, such as the Balobedu and many of the Vhavenda (Vanyayi) in terms of history of settlement and trade. Besides the Vatsonga they also share a history with the people of Modjadji and the old Rozwi (Rozvi) kingdom of Zimbabwe.

Similarly to the Vakhosa and other Xitsonga-speaking groups they also believe in the ancients known as Gwambe na Zavani (or Dzavani). This particular Gwambe of the N'wamitwa and Makhuva branches appears to have lived in the early 1600s to mid-1600s according to Mathebula (2018). Following the lineage of the Valoyi as indicated in Mathebula (2018), the generational count linking to the Lowani and Xifun'wani branches traces Gwambe to the 1600s. If accurate as indicated in Mathebula's analysis, who also states that the name Gwambe has also been used by a different group of the Karangas who settled in Inhambane, then the name may refer to leadership titles and not necessarily a specific name. In the case that it was used as a name it could be one that had referred to different individuals at separate timeframes. Not much detail is made available on the description of the name and more research on the topic could be afforded.

There is certainly one traceable group of the Karanga who conquered and assimilated into groups of the first of the Tonga near Inhambane in the mid-1500s. Ishe Gamba features in early Portuguese records as 'Gamba' who led his group of the Karangas who invaded the kingdom of Tonge in 1559, which

led to the development of a distinct culture that was a combination of both Karanga and Tonga influences (Maluleke 2021).

Earliest Traces

According to the Valoyi Traditional Authority (2016), the Valoyi migrated from Central Africa somewhere around 1499. This may be in reference to the north of Zimbabwe and parts of northern Mozambique. Mathebula (2018) links the Xifun'wani and Lowani branches back to the first Changameri of the late 1400s, who was under the dynasty of Mutapa led by Nyanhehwe Nebedza and his son Mukombero Nyahuma. This particular Changameri is known in the history of the Mutapa to have been part of the generals of the different factions who eventually rebelled and broke away from the Mutapa.

The name Valoyi appears to relate to the root word Valozwi, which has been variously spelled as Lozyi, Rozwi and Rozvi. A similar thing in such spellings is often encountered with the word "Kalanga" which has been often spelled as "Karanga", where the "L" is simply replaced with an "R"; however these groups are related beyond tribalism and alternate spellings are largely the result of colonial influences or as the product of variations in dialects between the Kalanga people themselves. The name Valoyi which is commonly written as "Baloyi" in South Africa therefore relates to what has been referred to as the "Rozwi Empire", according to oral and written history, which itself was founded by the Lozwi (or Rozwi) and Nyai people. The Rozwi Empire has a history with the early Mozambican Karanga kingdoms and this analysis may indicate that some of the early Karanga have formed as part of the Vatonga of Nyembane from the mid-1500s. The name "Kalanga" for them had been given to identify them as "northerners" in the

Shona language. The names Kalanga and N'walungu (Tsonga for "north") bear the same meaning though in different languages, where the N'wanati, the Hlave, and a section of the Vahlengwe had also been identified as "northerners" or living in the area of N'walungu (people of the north) or identified as speaking the N'walungu dialect.

Other Karanga-related groups (Lobedu, Mamabolo) in the south of the Limpopo are believed to have been established there before the second half of the 17th century, that is to say, just before the mid 1600s (Liesegang 2014a). On Karanga migrations to the area near Inhambane we can therefore conclude on the period between the mid-1500s to mid-1600s. Rita-Ferreira (1982) also suggests this timespan about the beginning of the arrival of groups of the Valoyi into that area. Soares de Castro in 1729 (cited in Liesegang 2014c) also traces the arrival of some of the Valoyi group in southern Mozambique to the period before the 17th century (before the 1600s). These records also mention the period in 1729 when the Valoyi invaded the Sono who were part of those referred to as "Vacumba/Vakumba". The Sono seem to have been closely related to the Vilankulu and Nkumbe and both groups are presented in the history to have preceded the Valoyi in southern Mozambique.

The "Gwambe" described in Mathebula and Mokgoatšana (2020) and the Gamba who was baptised by Father Andre Fernandes in 1560 (Maluleke 2021) appear to be separated by more-or-less a century in timeframe. Variations in some records pertaining to both names and their timeframes could mean that Junod (1927, p. 65) may have confused the timelines when he mentions the Zavala lineage as linking back to Gwambe who "belonged to the Bvesha people of Modjadji" and who settled near the Inharrime River at Xikome. Junod (1927, p. 66) states "If we take an average of thirty years for one generation we might infer from five generations that he [Gwambe] came in the beginning of the eighteenth century", which places Gwambe of the Zavala lineage in the 1700s, which is one more century after

Mathebula's (2018) chronology leading to the other Gwambe. On the other hand, Fuller (1955) links the Gumundu Matone Zavala lineage that is described by Junod (1927) to Gamba of 1560. In the old Portuguese records Gamba seems to have come into Vutonga via the area between Chigubo, Funhalouro, and Massinga which is today dominated by Xitswa speakers and today constitutes part of the larger Vilankulu area (Hall 1909 cited in Maluleke 2021). Both the Gwambe and Gamba groups in the history are spoken of in terms of a Karanga origin; hence all the history indicates a settlement in southern Mozambique, which points to some common origin and similarity regardless of the contradictions. European writings on early Tsonga history are known to carry much contradictions and this necessitates the proper documenting of history, as in this instance the original Gwambe is mentioned to have established his first settlement in the south of Mozambique in three different centuries.

The Zavala of Tsuvavura who are said to descend from one Gwambe are said to praise themselves as “*va ka Thovele*” which gives an indication of their relationship to the Bapedi, Karanga, and Rozwi who are also found among the Venda people of Limpopo who also praise their chiefs as *Thovhele*. Among the Chopi of southern Mozambique are surnames also found among the Venda, like the Manenzhe, Dakalo, and Sumbani. In the early 1900s, Gumundu Matone Zavala indicated that he is the son of Mwinyi, Mwinyi the son of Matone, Matone the son of Zavala, Zavala the son of Tsuvuwura, Tsuvawura the son of Gwambe (Junod 1927, p. 65). This Gwambe of the *va ka Thovele* who assimilated into the Chopi community is traceable to the period of the early 1700s according to Junod (1927). Upon arriving in Mozambique, these particular Gwambe people appear to have overcome the Nkumbe and the Vilankulu section of Mrori, many of whom pushed towards to west and north, re-establishing some of their chieftaincies outside the affected region. The Gwambe undoubtedly adopted the language of those ancient Chopi of Nkumbe, Vilankulu and others, as well as

the *tinhlanga* and *magwaba* (customary tattoos on the body and noses) (Junod 1927, p. 65-66).

The Valoyi clan therefore can be said to be related to the old kings of the mighty Rozwi and Karanga Empire of Mutapa, which had influence covering Zimbabwe and parts of Zambia and the northern parts of Mozambique by the mid-1500s. Changameri Dombo, believed to be related to the Gwambe branch under Gulukhulu (Mathebula 2018), is said to have led a campaign into the Transvaal during the late 1600s following wars in the Rozwi Kingdom of Zimbabwe (Alpers 1970). It may have been one of the sons of Changamire Chirimbi, Ghulukulu, who led the early Valoyi towards the coast of the Tsonga country before establishing a kingdom in Mvumba (Mathebula 2018). Gulukhulu is believed to have died during the beginning of the 1600s (Mathebula, 2018, p. 79).

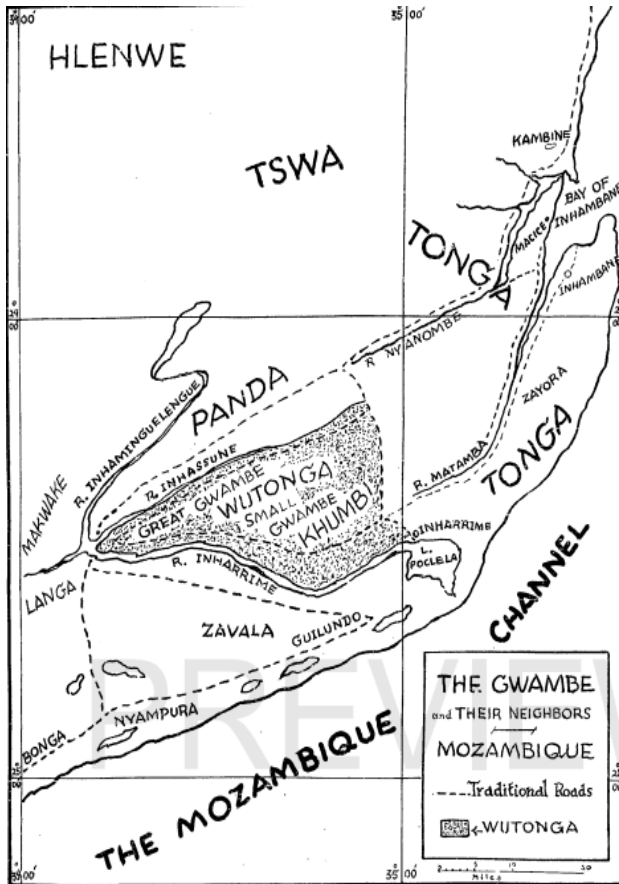
Mathebula and Mokgoatšana (2020, p. 4) on the migration of the *va ka Valoyi* mention that "the Valoyi seem to have moved from a place between the Mazoe and Nyadiri rivers and took the southeast direction, moving along the Limpopo River on its northern bank, up to its confluence with the Olifants River. The oral history of the Valoyi, specifically for the lineages currently based in Mozambique, states that on their arrival in Mozambique, the Valoyi established a settlement north of the Limpopo River, near its confluence with the Olifants".

Southern Africa Migrations

According to Junod (1912), a group of the Valoyi (perhaps a section of the Vanyayi) entered what is today the Limpopo where they settled among of Tsonga and Venda groups. There may have been some of the Maluleke arriving from southern Mozambique who settled at roughly the same period

as some of the Valoyi who were to be found in that region after 1600. The history of the Maluleke indicates they encountered groups of the Vanyayi near the north of the Limpopo River when they came from the south of Mozambique, at which time they fought some of the those Vanyayi and took the battles into the interior (Maluleke 2021). Some other neighbours of the Valoyi were the Mbhombhi and the Magoda who also show indications of a few battles of theirs with the Vanyayi. The Valoyi were “already settled at the confluence of the Oliphant and the Limpopo when the Ba-Nkuna came into the country from Swaziland or the Zululand mountains” at around the 1700s (Junod 1905, p. 227), which gives indications of the settlement history of the Valoyi in the confluence of the Oliphant and the Limpopo rivers before the 1700s.

The Rozwi formed a powerful army and they used military strategies that were later incorporated by Shaka Zulu and they too used spears and shields long before the emergence of the Zulu kingdom (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2017). In addition to being related to many of the Vatsonga groups, the Varozwi also came to be related to a section of the Venda groups who went to settle near the Limpopo River in the late 1600s after the death of Changameri Dombo. A Rozwi history of origin in the 1600s would also link the Lowani and Xifun’wani branches of the Valoyi to this particular Changameri Dombo.



(Image: The map shows the parts settled by groups of the Gwambe around the area of wutonga/vutonga, as well as groups of the Langa, Makwakwa, Tswa, Chopi, and Tonga, published in Fuller (1955))

On the history of their neighbours in their early settlements, Mathebula and Mokgoatšana (2020, p. 3) indicate “It is unlikely that the Valoyi and the Maluleke, or any other branch of the Van’wanati for that matter, migrated together from the present-day Zimbabwe. In fact, there is no historical evidence linking the Van’wanati, as a society, with the present-day Zimbabwe. What seems to have happened is that the Valoyi appear to have arrived in the Mozambique’s interior almost at the same time with the Maluleke coming from N’wanati country in the east coast, and they settled in the vicinity of the Valoyi, who had just arrived from the present-day Zimbabwe interior.”

There does however seem to be at least one group of the Vatsonga or Vatswa who went into the southern parts of Mozambique coming from the Mutapa Empire in the north, namely the Sono. However since the Mutapa Empire also covered kingdoms in the centre of Mozambique such as Kiteve and Manika, many groups could have come from those areas below Tete and not necessarily from what is today Zimbabwe. One record suggests that a certain “Sono” had been a general who commanded one of the armies of Mutapa in the beginning of the 1500s, who had a status similar to that of the first Changameri as a general who controlled parts of the Mutapa army, and who rebelled against the reigning Mutapa Kakuya Kamunyaka in 1516 (Livneh 1976). Sono does not feature in that history again after the rebellion of 1516, indicating their break-away from the Empire. The name Sono by the period of the 1600s-1700s could have also referred to a group of people that had already been speaking the Xitswa language and can be said to have already been distinguishable from the Karanga, if we follow the narrative that an ancestral language of Xitsonga was well developed long before 1500. The period of the rebellion of Sono in 1516 seems to have been followed up by the entry of one “Gamba” into the Tonga and Chopi area near the coast of Mozambique later in 1559, as the early 1500s were dominated by great conflicts and rebellion among many of the Mutapa’s allies (Maluleke 2021).

The group of Mavila is said to also belong to the Valoyi. This group seems more likely to have been among those who entered into the Chopi and Tonga area of Mozambique in the 1700s. They, like the Venda and Lobedu-related group of Zavala, are said to have come from near the Libombo Mountains hunting elephants and eventually settled among the Vacopi groups in the 1700s. Junod (1927, p. 67) states that the Mavila section of the Valoyi people were led by "Makunyule and Mbandze" into Chopiland. These *va ka Valoyi* groups, upon arriving, had paid homage to the Vilankulu (Junod 1927, p. 68) but soon established their independence through arms, and Matos (cited in Ferreira (1975, p. 22) mentions the Mbande (who gave rise to the Mavila chieftaincy) as having paid tribute also to the Khambane section of the N'wanati clan. In subsequent years the Mavila chieftaincy grew more independent as they grew in military strength and eventually overcame one section of the Vilankulu.

According to oral traditions recorded by Liesegang (2014a) and Jacques (1982, p. 137) some sections of the Valoyi who joined the Chopi near the Inharrime River had left the Valoyi region near the Olifants River after an attack by Nkome of the Khambane/Mondlane section of the N'wanati. This refers to the period of the 1700s when the section of the Mbande moved towards the coastal areas of Mozambique and later defeated a group of the Vilankulu as recorded in other sources (Junod 1927).

On the migrations inland, Mathebula and Mokgoatšana (2020, p. 6) state that the Lowani group was the first of the Valoyi group to head into the Limpopo region at some time in the late 1700s. Lowani is said to have succeeded Gwambe and "reigned from the Gulukhulu royal residence where his grave is located", whereas his descendants settled in various areas in the west and between the Limpopo and Olifants rivers (Mathebula 2018, p. 123–124).

"They began to migrate to Limpopo in the 1790s, occupying mainly what later became known as the Kruger National Park. Migrations by other

lineages began in the 1830s, continuing until the middle of the 18th century, with some moving as far as the Zoutpansberg Mountains in the far northern part of Limpopo” – (Mathebula 2018, p. 124; Mathebula & Mokgoatšana 2020).

During the Boer conflict against the Valoyi and the Balobedu in the 1900s, the Valoyi were displaced and relocated to N’wamitwa (Mathebula 2013). The Boers raided the Valoyi territory in Queque and confiscated their cattle, land, and weapons.

Gwambe

Gwambe, from what is known, is the name of one of the early leaders of the Valoyi people who gave birth to the Lowani and Xifun’wani branches. A Gwambe culture seems to have been well-developed in the coastal area of Mozambique near Inhambane by the 1600s-1700s. The name “Magwamba” in the Transvaal was given to many of those who either identified with that Mozambican Gwambe culture or who identified with the customary tattooing or scarification known locally in Chopiland as *magwaba* (“*knobneusen*” to the Afrikaners).

Regarding the name Gwambe, Junod (1912, p. 21) mentions how the Vadjonga group knew the first ancestors as “Gwambe and Dzabana”. Both names “Gwambe na Dzavana”, however, have been questioned as to whether they actually denote particular individuals or if they have been used by different groups simply referring to different urban legends. The name “Gwamba” also features among the Khosa, most clearly as a once-known part of land near Magude.

The name Zavani is found among the Tonga people of Nyatsiku who have headmanship under one of the first Chopi groups of the Nkumbe (Webster 1976). This name is still known by some in those parts.

By the year 1560, at least one Karanga group under Ishe Gamba had established itself as one of the renowned kingdoms of the area near Inhambane (Junod 1970; Mathebula 2013; Maluleke 2021). One other name that could have been mistaken for Zavani/Dzavani/Dzabana is that of Zavala, a different group to the Nyatsiku of Zavani. The group of Zavala (Thovele) is known to live near the Tonga people of Inhambane, southern Mozambique, and are today considered Chopi. The Zavala claim to be related to the Balobedu, but it is not clear if they are part of the same Gwambe/Gwamba lineage as the South African group of *va ka* Valoyi. On the issue of the naming, Mathebula (2018, p. 77) gives some clarification on the history of the name Gwambe:

“The name “Gwambe” is common in Kalanga language as it is also found among other Kalanga groups such as in Inhambane Province in Mozambique, where another man by the same name founded another Kalanga kingdom among the Tonga (also called Copi) (Jacques 1938; Junod 1977; Liesegang 1977). There is no relationship between the two leaders other than sharing the Kalanga origins (Shilowa 2009)”.

On the other hand, the Tonga people in the Southern Province of Zambia are also sometimes classified as the Gwembe-Tonga. This name is in reference to the small town and valley known as Gwembe Valley in the southern part of Zambia, and it too has no relationship with the Gwambe or Gwamba discussed in this section. The two groups of the Tsonga and the Tonga of Zambia also share no visible interaction in any of the available history.

Of the Valoyi groups who migrated to modern Limpopo Province, Mathebula (2018, p. 105) mentions the Lowani, Xifun'wani, Xivodze,

Mpondwana, and Mkansi. It is stated in Mathebula (2018,p. 97) that Gwambe “chose Lowani as his heir because the xidzuvulo represented land and land represented the power and the throne”.

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

The Valoyi have played an important role in trade with the great Zimbabwean kingdoms. They have also helped to protect the bay area around the historic Copi (Chopi) trading post and around the Tonga post in present-day Mozambique. They have supplied a lot of assistance to the Vatsonga and Balobedu and have been some of the most dominant forces to ensure the survival of various allied groups.

One of the original Tonga kingdoms, identified in Portuguese documents as Botonga or the kingdom of Otongue (a mispronunciation of *Vutonga*), was in some parts conquered by Gamba of an early branch of the Karanga, which led to the integration of certain Karanga or Nyai elements into the ancient Chopi culture.

The Valoyi defeated Soshangane and his army at the Battle of Xihaheni, protecting many of the Tsonga tribes stationed at the area. Under the leadership of Nkami and Mbhekwana, the Valoyi expanded their kingdom outside the influences of Gaza control, and with support from the Balobedu, the Vankuna, Vaxika, Mavunda, and Van’wanati, they managed to sustain their legacy within the Transvaal.

Groups of the Valoyi are known to have lived in the Limpopo National Park near the Limpopo River, and similarly to the Mbhombhi, N’wanati, Hlanganu, Hlengwe, Xingwedzi, and Tembe their old settlement areas now constitute parts of the countries Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa

respectively where wildlife is protected and which have become conservation areas that are mostly used for tourism.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

N'wamitwa	Makhuva
TLP N'wamitwa II Fofeza N'wamitwa Rufus N'wamitwa Mahlabezulu Mahwahwa N'wamitwa Mbhekwana Xitsavi/Xihlomulo (r. early 1800s to mid 1800s) Ximatsi Gondoni Kutlalani/Ntehe	Nkhavi Kaiser (d. 1966) Mashila (d. 1949) Magulasavi Makhuva Phangweni Nkami (d. 1855) Nxolwani Xikungulu Lowani Gwambe / Gutse (mid to late 1600s)

 Xifun'wani Gwambe / Gutse (mid to late 1600s) Gulukhulu (d. early 1600s)	 Gulukhulu (d. early 1600s)
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Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Dombo
Gon'on'o
Lowani (Lowane)
Madzenga
Maghoro
Maghoveni
Mahlathi

Mahuntsi
Makaringe
Makhuva
Maringani
Mathevula (Mathebula)
Mavilani (Mavila)
Maxavani
Maxila
Mbandze
Mkhalangana
Mokgalaka
Mongwe
Mpofu
Mukansi
Munyayi (Munyai)
Mbande
Ndengeza
Nkami

Nkuzana
Nyarhi
Phangweni
Ribhungwana
Valoyi (Baloyi)
Xighivitsi
Xilowa (Shilowa)
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) given by Wilson Valoyi, (1992 cited in Malungana 1994, p. 127):

*"Hi mina Wilson;
Wa Stephan;
Wa Makhokho;
Wa Pilane;
Wa Dzenga;
Wa Lowana;
Wa Malengana;*

*Hi va ka gulukhulu;
Wa mfenhe;
Hi va ka ncila-a-va-ololi;
Loko u wu olola wa tshoveka;
Hi va ka soko ra Gwambe!
Vadyi va swipame;
Va ka congamela;
Va ka tluntlama hi tamba ra valoyi;
Va ka xiamba-milandzu;
Va ka xitsundzuxa-hi-matlhari;
Va ka combeni;
Va ka mana wa nanga;
Va ka N'wamanyuluzana wa combeni;
Va ka Mthondolovhana;
Jaha-xo-bomba;
Mabomba-hi-mirhi;
Mabomba-hi-vana;
Mahisa vana-hi-milombyana;
Xi-famba-hi-matsambu yo nonoka;
Va ka murhi-ha-tlalamba;
Hi va ka murhi hi wu khandziya hi nsinya;
Va ka maxika-hi-tindzhavi;
Hi va ka n'wana-emakatleni!
Kaya-ka-hina entshaveni;
Kaya-ka-hina encombeni;
Hi va ka Mathevula;
Mathevula wa Valoyi;
Loko hi ku Valoyi va ri;
Thevu kumbe Valoyi."*

HISTORY OF THE VANKOMATI

Introduction

Nkomati is a name shared with the Nkomati bank near Mpumalanga and Swaziland. It is a name given to the Tsonga tribes that settled at the area in remote times. The Vankomati clan includes the tribes under the leadership of Mathye or Mundlovhu, as well as the Siweya tribe of N'wamanungu. Some of the Vankomati later shared territorial borders with the Vaxika and also the Vaxingwedzi near Giyani and the Ritavi area, and many of them could be found nearer to the Lubombo Mountains. Vankomati are closest related to the Vaxika group of Ngomani with whom they shared borders.

Southern Africa Migrations

The Vankomati as defined in this section consist of different lineages that claim to originate from distinct areas before reaching Mozambique. The Mundlovu lineage, for example, claims to originate from what is today KwaZulu Natal at a place they know as Babanango (the land of Vutungwa). Mathye of Ndlovu is known to have led his people and children from those parts during the early Nguni wars known as the battles of *Matiwana*. They arrived in Mozambique at a place that was ruled by the Makumbila, who they defeated and took over the reigns.

In 1846, João Albasini commissioned Johannes Joubert to build a trading post called Mokomeng near Lydenburg (in what is today Mpumalanga Province), located on the left bank of the Phabeni Spruit, near its confluence with the Sabie River. The post was established near the Kraal of Chief Magashula. Albasini also set up outposts and trading shops in Pretoriusskop

and Josekhulu Spruit, with his leading generals Josikhulu and N'waManungu in charge.

Kgoshi Magashula, who ruled one of the Mapulana kingdoms in the 1840s, allowed João Albasini and his African followers to settle in the area around the Numbi gate and PretoriusKop. In return for the Numbi lands, Albasini gave Kgoshi Magashula 200 cattle as the purchase price (De Vaal 1945). This arrangement was made to secure their support in defense against the neighbouring Swazi forces, who frequently attacked the Pulana people. Albasini played a major role in preventing the Swazis from conquering Magashula (De Vaal 1945).

In 1847, Albasini moved to Rustplaas near Ohrigstad. Later, in 1848, a group of Boers settled in Schoemansdal, and Albasini followed them to the Zoutpansberg region in today's Limpopo Province together with his followers. In 1853 Albasini and his group of followers had settled on the Goedewensch farm around Piesangkop in Zoutpansberg, where he became their leader until his death in 1888 (Van Ryneveldt 1998).

It is important to note that although Albasini met many Tsonga groups living in the Zoutpansberg area up to the Limpopo River, not all of them considered him their chief. Some did however consider him as their leader because he led them from Mpumalanga and into new territory and placed some of them as his allies. In old African tradition a leader who establishes headmen under new territory was seen as a leading figure, and this was the case with groups such as those of N'wamanungu, Chavalala, and some of the Mavunda. Many of the Tsonga groups did already have their own leaders who they arrived with before 1840 in what is today the Limpopo Province before Albasini's group arrived. Many of the Tsonga royal leaders after 1850 were however dominated using political influence by Albasini and the Boers. Various Tsonga royal leaders often contributed their armies to assist Albasini in battle against groups of the Venda, Pedi, and Swazi. In some instances the Venda also sought the help of Albasini and the Tsonga

warriors in battles against each other, with one example being the Davhana who even came to settle nearer to the Tsonga of Njhakanjhaka and gave rise to the village of Mpheni (a Venda name which means "give me"). Albasini served as the local native commissioner in the Spelonken and as a tax collector for the Boers but after he lost his job and passed away in 1888 the political influence of the Albasini family began to fade away. Today the Albasini Dam and Resort between Elim and the Zoutpansberg mountains are some of the tangible parts of history left of the Albasini name.

History shows that N'waManungu Siweya, Munene Pandeka, and Ximixoni/Simswane were prominent generals in the Albasini army. Albasini sent his army, led by Generals N'waManungu and Ximixoni, to assist the Boer leaders Marthinus Wessel Pretorius and Pieter Potgieter in attacking the Bapedi (Van Ryneveldt 1998). Albasini and his generals also conducted military campaigns against other groups, including the Mashau, Magoro and Mphephu, where they defeated some of the Venda people. N'waManungu and other army generals were rewarded with land in various parts of Spelonken for their military service (Van Ryneveldt 1998).

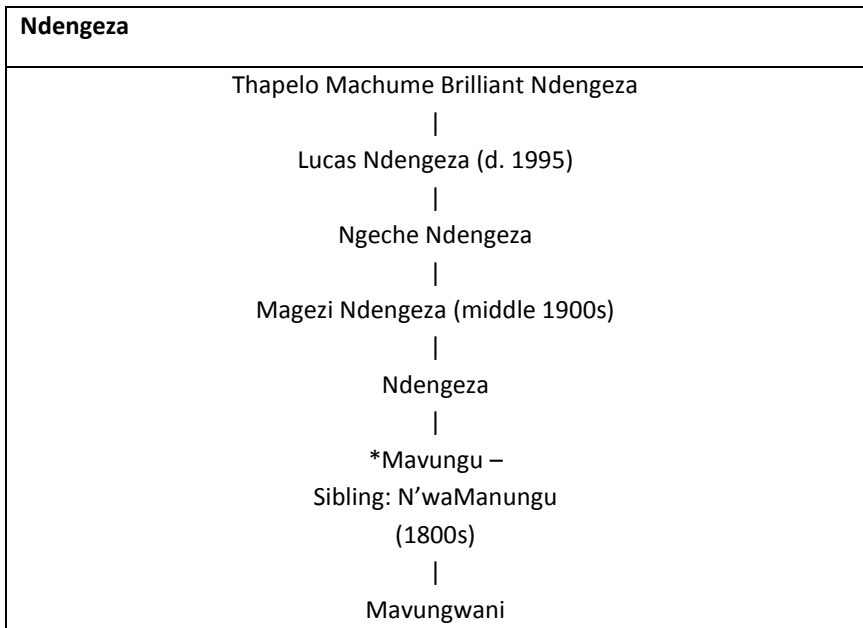
Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

In the 1700s different groups of the Nkomati formed a large part of the areas in Mpumalanga and certain parts of Swaziland, where life in the vast terrain near the Libombo mountains determined their survival in the wild. Oral history gives indications of their presence in those parts of the country where much trading and livestock farming took place.

Like the Vaxingwedzi, the Vankomati in the mid-to-late 1800s formed some of the armies of the Xipilongo (Spelonken) or those known in history as the "Magwamba" army. The tribe under N'wamanungu, for example, were part of the main battle forces of the Xipilongo (Spelonken) district. These groups

were armed by João Albasini and they protected the territory of their people on a number of occasions from hostile invaders.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)



Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all

people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Maringa
Mathye
Mundlovhu
Ndhimandhi
Ntimani
Rivombo
Sambo
Siweya
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) given by Grace Ndlovu (n.d. cited in Malungana 1994, p. 139):

*“Hi mina Grace;
Wa Xinyarhana;
Wa Mahambahleka;
Wa Mbangu;*

*Wa Mpupupu;
Loko hi tiphata hi ri:
Hi me Grace wa Ndlovu;
Wa n'wana Xinyarhana;
Hi va ka Ndlovu hina, hi va ka ndlopfu a ti luvan;
To luvana mincila;
Hi va ka Ndlovu a yi dli mithi!
Hi va ka dla gaja!
Hi va ka madya-henhla!
Hi va ka Ndlovu Mathye;
Hi va ka xiharhi xikulu;
Hi cina ndlopfu!"*

HISTORY OF THE VAHLENGWE

Introduction

The term Vahlengwe was used to designate some of the Vatsonga who lived to the south-east of Mozambique and Zimbabwe. They were mostly situated in southern Mozambique and covered the largest land mass of all the Tsonga clans after integrating with the Vatswa who were also a large group. This area of the Tsonga country was known as *eHlengweni* and their kingdom in Mozambique was also known as the Hlenga and Hlengwe (meaning “collection”). In older times, some sections of the Vatswa, together with the Van’wanati, Vabila, and Vacopi, were also referred to as ‘Valenge/Valengue’ (Earthy 1933), after having been acquainted with the Lenge dialect that is a combination of Xitswa and old Xicopi. It is therefore important to know that the Vahlengwe and Valenge are separate groups and some authors will tend to confuse the two.

Some of the Vahlengwe speak a particular dialect known as Xihlengwe, which seems to also be the product of the Tswa language (Xitswa). The Vahlengwe of Cawuke are Vatswa by assimilation and are perhaps closest related to the Vatembe or the Nyaka, as evidenced by the genologies of the ancients and their oral folktales, and place of origin in the south near Tembeland or further in the Hlubi areas. Other tales of their history with the territory of the old Nyaka establishment give some insights into this.

Vahlengwe identify with the following sub-groups:

Vahlengwe va Mantsena: They are one of the largest Tsonga sub-groups, together with the Madzive section. Some of the most memorable ancestors

who are credited to have formed many of today's Hlengwe tribes originate from this branch of the Vahlengwe. Zari, who was the son of Mangule is one of the outstanding figures from this branch of the clan. The most famous surname among the Vahlengwe of Xigombe is undoubtedly that of Cawuke (Chauke). The Xigombe subsection entered a marriage alliance with the Valoyi and Maluleke of Van'wanati after relocating nearer to the Limpopo River area. They largely refused to be part the hostility of the Gaza-Nguni raids and joined the Vatsonga who had already settled within the Limpopo Province, mostly the Maluleke and they can today be found in large numbers in the area of Malamulele. Many of the Hlengwe royal houses from this branch who remained in Mozambique seem to have continued to reign during the lifetime of the rule of the Gaza Nguni and after its downfall.

Vahlengwe va Madzive: They are mostly found in southern Mozambique. They too had the largest land mass and wealth of any of the Vatsonga clans and they came under siege from the Ndwandwe armies during the 1820s. The Ndwandwe army captured most of the Vahlengwe territory and it became part of the Gaza State. The Madzive moved closer to the groups that are found nearer to Inhambane. The most well-known of the Madzive group are the Ximundana. They descend from the Vahlengwe of Dzive (Vadzive) and became a part of the Vatswa royal lineage. This group were constantly under attack by the Gaza State under Mzila as they refused to pay allegiance to the Ndwandwe.

Rita-Ferreira (1959, p. 58) speaks of the primitive traditions of the Vahlengwe, such as the old style of hunting and foraging, that they did not keep domestic animals, as well as other old habits. Also mentioned is the fact that Vahlengwe also practiced the scarification customs similarly to other Vatsonga and the Vacopi, and the Vahlengwe also practiced circumcision. A small penis sheath was often used for certain marks (Rita-Ferreira 1959). Some of the Makwakwa among the Vahlengwe who were acculturated into the Nguni are said to have abandoned the scarification and circumcision customs in the 1800s, and they also adopted the Nguni piercing

of the earlobes, which indicates the degree of difference between the native Tsonga and Nguni traditions. The missionary Junod (1912, p. 15) found that the Hlengwe formed part of the groups that used the pronunciation 'Tsonga' with the 's' included (a term that bears the same meaning as Tjonga, Thonga, and Ronga), which the Hlengwe also used to call themselves. This debunks the notion by some that missionaries created the term 'Tsonga', as in this case Henri Junod (a missionary himself) states in writing that the Hlengwe called themselves Tsonga.

Earliest Traces

The Vahlengwe married into the Vatswa tribes and a lot of the Vahlengwe speak in a peculiar Tswa dialect throughout southern Mozambique. It is not exactly clear if the Vahlengwe of Cawuke originate directly from the Tswa groups, however, the well-known interactions between the two occurred during the reign of Bangwane. The Vatswa themselves show a continuous occupation within southern Africa, especially in southern Mozambique and parts of eastern Zimbabwe. It is not strange to have Africans share a long lost history of a common origin, and it is worthwhile to acknowledge the unrecorded history through oral discourse while tracking the periods of occupation and settlement.

According to Velez Grilo (1958, p. 114) "Xahuke" (Chauke) left the "Sikundweni" or "Xikundzane", and went to the land of the "Mungwato". From there via Zululand they crossed over into Maputo travelling up the Nkomati River until they reached the Save across the Limpopo River at which time they settled near the Vacopi, Vilankulu, Valoyi, Vadzonga, Vatswa, and Rhonga territories in southern Mozambique. This is indicative that they may have branched out from parts of today's KwaZulu Natal area before settling in Mozambique and it is likely their origins point to the area

between the land of the Tembe and that which had been dominated by the Hluvi. The Nyaka kingdom, long before the existence of the name South Africa, had been one among the old kingdoms of the Tonga/Ronga in South Africa. The disintegration of this kingdom must have had an impact on the dispersal of many groups who formed part of the early Tonga/Ronga groups in areas within Maputo, St Lucia Bay, and parts of KwaZulu Natal.

Southern Africa Migrations

The Vahlengwe are known today to be related to the Vatswa and Vamhandla groups of Sono and Hlungwani. One particular Hlengwe dialect in Mozambique is partly a transition between Xitswa and Xirhonga and the Vahlengwe in South Africa adhere to Xitsonga, with those in areas of Malamulele leaning towards a N'walungu dialect. Velez Grilo (1958) indicates that a group led by the Chauke under Muhehi fought lengthy wars against the Valoyi, after expelling the Vanyayi, and that during this conflict the Chauke were eventually defeated and their chief Muhehi (the father of Shikwalakwala and Pambulo) was killed in the battle. This is when parts of the Chauke were assimilated and eventually married into the "N'walungu" cluster of clans and other surrounding neighbours.

The Vahlengwe nearer to Zimbabwe and South Africa had a complex relationship, often engaging in direct conflict among themselves. The Vahlengwe of Sengwe tribe who sided with the Gaza State in the mid-1800s were spared from attacks by the Gaza forces, while two other chiefs, namely Xitanga and Mpapa, were rebelling against one another. Xitanga went to the Ndebeles for support in order to confront the chief Mpapa (Mathebula *et al.* 2007). Other Vahlengwe who did not pay tribute to the Gaza State were constantly raided and attacked, so many of the tribes fled to different parts. Some of the Vahlengwe also had to pay tribute to the Boers in order to be

granted free movement in the Transvaal. The practice of paying tribute was not merely a sign of allegiance or royal subordination but was often a way to secure the right of way, to trade freely, or to spare the tribe from attack (Mathebula *et al.* 2007). The Vahlengwe of Xigombe and Madzive were largely the victims of the Ndwandwe conquests and some were conquered by the armies under Soshangane who turned most parts of their territory into raiding spots of the Gaza State. A lot of the Vahlengwe of Xigombe were forced to flee into the interior of the Limpopo while many of the remaining leadership succumbed to the rite of inter-cultural marriage. The leading houses of the Cawuke today still have various recognised traditional leaderships in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

Xinyori

Xinyori is the oldest traceable ancestor of the Vahlengwe of Cawuke in the found history records and is the one who fathered Bangwane, who fathered the two branches of Mantsena and Madzive. Xinyori was also known “*Xa humba*” and “*Xioki xa Ndzilo*”. Xinyori is therefore considered to be the founder of the Cawuke (Tshauke/Chauke) clan which also came to be known as Vahlengwe/Vahlenga.

In the work of Velez Grilo (1958) Xinyori is identified as one of the early founders of the Cawuke clan and other related groups. The term *xinyori* in the Tsonga language refers to a type of wind instrument that is played similarly to a flute. This is one other indication that the Hlengwe were already a Xitsonga-speaking group by the time of Xinyori in the early 1600s. From this, a link can be drawn between the Vahlengwe and other Tsonga groups such as the Vatembe and Rhonga and this is one other indication of the prehistoric interconnectedness of the Tsonga people. The Tsonga people are largely thought to originate from different groups but many such groups

themselves appear to have a very strong historical link to the ancient Tsonga language.

Mantsena and Madzive

The origins of the name “Vahlengwe” stems from the people's wealth. In the early 1800s, the Vahlengwe were wealthy when it came to land mass, cattle, and resources. “*Hlenga*” in Xitsonga means to collect or gather, and a honey comb for instance is known as “*xihlenga*” or “*xihlengwe*”. The Vahlengwe clan is one of the largest Vatsonga clans and they were mass traders, hence the appellation “*vahlenga*”. According to oral traditions the Vahlengwe were among the richest of the Vatsonga clans. This made them very susceptible to attacks. Their kingdom was also apparently one of the routes where the Portuguese passed to extract resources such as gold and diamonds from neighbouring parts of the Shona-speaking communities and Manyika kingdoms to the north-west of Mozambique.

The name Mantsena in Xitsonga translates to “the lone one” or “one who lives in solitude”. The name Madzive can also be traced in Tsonga vocabulary where the noun ‘*dziva*’ refers to a fringe or a welt (in plural form in Xitsonga it is *madziva* – “many fringes”). It can also relate to deepness (of for example a pool) such as in the term *xidziva* or it can even refer to thickness.

According to Junod (1912; 1913) who learned from oral traditions, Vahlengwe came to accept the ways of using fire at a later time than most other Tsonga people. This would mean they preferred to eat their food raw. They are also known as the snail people (such the phrase *xa humba*), which they ate raw. Mantsena was a leader of the Vahlengwe who led them to eventually adopt the use of fire for cooking. This tale could also be analogous to a family union between the Cawuke and Sono (Vahlenga) royal

houses. According to oral traditions, Mantsena was the son of Bangwane (whose wife, N'wa Zinjiva, was a daughter of the Hlungwani family), and Madzive was Mantsena's brother.

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

Vahlengwe have played a leading role in organising and managing trade along the Mozambican coastal area. They have traded in all sorts of things including beads, ivory, cloth, and even gold. The early Vatswa and the Hlengwe played a crucial part in unifying Xihlengwe, Xitswa, Xitonga, and Xirhonga from early times, which ultimately formed a crucial element in what is today considered Xitsonga.

The Vahlengwe have also contributed tremendously in the development and growth of Xitsonga traditional and mainstream music. They are expert composers and learned how to operate Tsonga music instruments from very distant times. A lot of the best Xitsonga music artists are from the Hlengwe group. Most of the Vahlengwe also had minimal influence from Semitic culture in contrast to the Tonga and Chopi people around Inhambane for example, and their social life was more rural as they were based inland unlike the coastal areas of Inhambane, Vilankulu, and Xai-Xai.

The Vahlengwe are also found in large numbers within the Gonarezhou National Park bordering Zimbabwe and Mozambique and many of the Vahlengwe have been employed in the area over the past years, being actively involved in the wildlife. Like the Vahlanganu, Van'wanati, Vaxingwedzi, Vatembe, and Valoyi their settlement in a conservational area has largely been disrupted by politics and national borders that sliced their people into separate countries, effectively destabilizing their kingdoms and sense of unity, with Vahlengwe groups now split into three different countries (Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and South Africa).

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

Mantsena	Mantsena	Madzive
<p>Mdun'wasi Mudavula</p> <p> </p> <p>Mbhedlhe</p> <p> </p> <p>Malayi Mudavula</p> <p> </p> <p>Xandlale</p> <p> </p> <p>Machele</p> <p> </p> <p>Banga</p> <p> </p> <p>Mihingo</p> <p> </p> <p>Zari</p> <p>(late 1700s-early 1800s)</p> <p> </p> <p>Mangule</p> <p> </p> <p>Mantsena</p> <p> </p> <p>Bangwane (Xioki xa Ndzilo)</p> <p>(mid-1600s-early-</p>	<p>Sengwe</p> <p> </p> <p>Xikwalakwala</p> <p> </p> <p>Macema</p> <p> </p> <p>Xikovele</p> <p> </p> <p>Xigombe</p> <p> </p> <p>Mantsena</p> <p> </p> <p>Bangwane (Xioki xa Ndzilo)</p>	<p>Ximundana</p> <p> </p> <p>Madzive</p> <p> </p> <p>Bangwane/Xioki xa Ndzilo</p> <p>(mid-1600s-early-1700s)</p>

1700s) Cawuke (Xinyori xa humba)	(mid-1600s-early-1700s) Cawuke (Xinyori xa humba)	 Cawuke (Xinyori xa humba)
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Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Bangwane
Cawuke (Chauke)
Cuma
Gudluza
Hlomela
Hlungwani
Maceke
Madonsi
Madzive
Magulugudu

Magwinyane
Makondo
Manele
Mapapila
Masinga
Masungwini
Mavasa (Mabasa)
Mavube
Mbenzane
Mbiza
Mphakati
Mtititi
Muchipisi
Mudavula
Muhunguti
Mukhomi
Pandeka
Phaphazela
Sono
Tshovani

Xibangwa
Xigamani
Xigombe
Xilenge
Xitlhangu
Zari
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry
(Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) cited from Wakahina.co.za (2016):

*“Hi Vanhlengwe;
Va Xinyori xa humba;
Xioki xa Ndzilo;
Wa Nyoxi, wa Mulwana;
wa Xisakamimpfi;
Malilwana;
Wa Ntsandza Chavani, ndzi chava mahika wa mumu wa tolo;
wa vukolokoco maribenyi, hlazeni mahula homu;
madyaswambisi!”*

HISTORY OF THE VADZONGA

Introduction

The name *Dzonga* means South and the Vadzonga (or Vadjonga) are those Tsonga groups who had settled to the South of the Olifant River before branching out into the north and into parts of southern Mozambique. Vadzonga properly included as a majority the Xivuri, Mathye, Nkhabelane, and the Vakhosa and some of the Vahlave who shared the closest borders around the area south of the *N'walungu* (North) places. The area of distribution of the Vakhosa and Vahlave shared close relations with the nearby *Dzonga* (South) territory and the particular dialect was very much similar throughout this area. Vadzonga territory was sandwiched between the Hlanganu in the south-west and Hlengwe territories in the north-west, and to their North along the Limpopo River was the *N'walungu* group which included the Valoyi and Maluleke. The name itself is not a designation of a particular clan but identifies a grouping of clans who were woven into a particular community. These designations of clans according to geographic location were primarily used to identify the variations in dialect when the Vatsonga people's social life was being studied in the early 1900s (Junod 1912; Junod 1913).

Earliest Traces

Vadzonga such as those of Xivuri and Nkhabelane it seems are related to the northern Sotho groups of the Bapedi. Not much documented information is available on their early movements and settlements. Other tribes such as Vakhosa, according to oral traditions, are traced to the Vambayi. By linking

the early settlements and oral traditions of the Vadzonga and Vakhosa groups, it comes across that some of these groups are closest related to the larger Varhonga collective together with groups such as the Vaxika and Vaxingwedzi, with some maintaining a direct line of descent from groups of the northern Sotho and Swati who intermarried with early tribes of the Tsonga-speaking community.

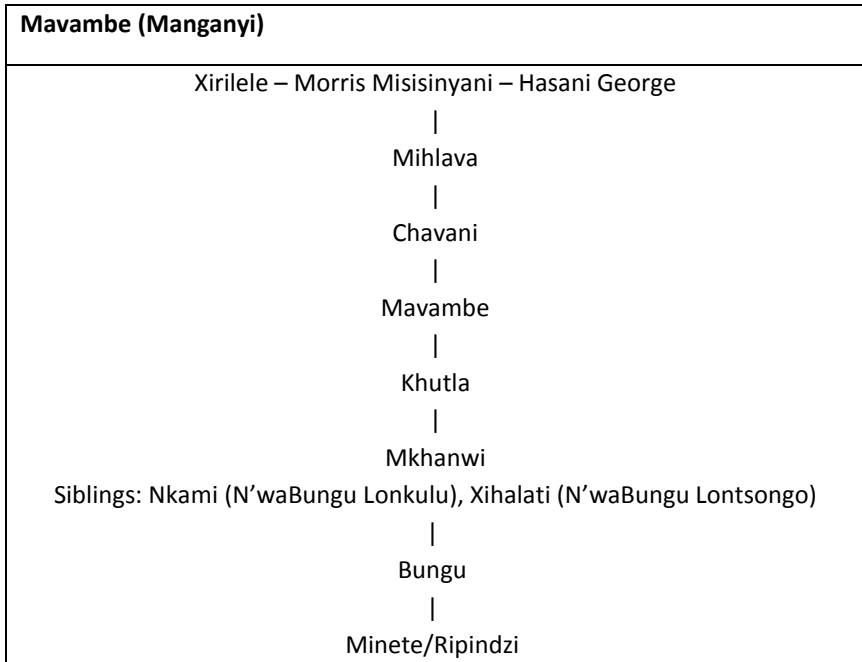
Southern Africa Migrations

Vadzonga tribes of Khoseni under the leadership of Mbhanye, together with the Rikhotso under the command of the Makwakwa and of Xivuri under Xitlhama, were attacked and defeated by Soshangane's forces in the period between 1835 to 1850. Many of the civilians fled the wars to settle in the Transvaal while the militants remained and fought bravely to protect their territory. Many of those who were defeated were imprisoned and later eventually incorporated into the newly established Gaza Kingdom under the *Mabuyindlela* or *Mavulandlela* regiments who were mostly comprised of the communities based at Bileni.

During the late 1800s a lot of the southern groups speaking the Dzonga dialect were embroiled in their own internal conflicts and many migrated to what is today South Africa. At this time in the late 1890s the chief of the Mundlovu/Mathye lineage, Munyamana, was in conflict with a section of the Khosa of Magigwana. In 1897 Munyamana was awarded land near the place of Mathye and was appointed as a local chief after assisting in war against the Gaza forces and after revealing the hiding place of Migigwana Khosa during the final stages of the war against the Gaza Nguni. Magigwana had just been defeated in the battle of Macontene and was on the run to the Transvaal when he was found hiding at Mapulangweni. Munyamana informed the Portuguese of Magigwana's whereabouts and Mouzinho de

Albuquerque found him (Magigwana) hiding in the forest where he was apprehended. At this time a lot of the communities who spoke the Dzonga dialect migrated to the Transvaal where they settled in different waves at the places beginning from Spelonken up to Malamulele.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)



Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Khosa
Mahatlani
Mahlawule
Manganyi
Marholeni
Masuluke
Mathye
Majosi
Mavambe
Mavone (Mabone)
Nkhabelane (Nkhavele)
Ntangwani
Ntimane
Rikhotso

Sambo
Xivuri (Shiburi)
Xikhotana
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) of the Rikhotso given by Freddy Rikhotso (1992 cited in Malungana 1994, p. 131):

*“Hi Vanyamatsi va rivengo ni vanhu;
 Hi va ka mabyisa tihomu ti vuya etshangeni eNyamatsi;
 Himakuma ndlela ya homu ni mbuti ni xikomu;
 Hi va n'wahisa nhova byanyi byi ri karhi byi tsakama;
 Va ka Rikhotso xitlula leswi tameriweke hi tihosi;
 Va ka makandziya ko oma ku sala ku baleka nhlangasi;
 Mavuthu ya sala ya nwa mati koho;
 Va ka makula-nkondzo;
 Laha wu kandziyaka koho va sala va nyanga;
 Maleha-nyonga ya ka Rikhotso;
 Va ka manyika hi xirhuva;
 Ximanga dzimani, khoma va nga dlayi;
 Va dlayela ku nyanga;
 Va ka xikhongolotana xo famba hi nhlana xi tshika ku famba hi khwiri;
 Va ka Rikhotso vo famba hi ndzhandze va chava ku wela;
 Mbhuri ya kondlo xi bomba hi malwangu;*

*N'waxibyara nkumana;
N'wamavulavula hi ku famba erhengweni;
Va ka n'wayima ka rivala va pfumala ntlhavo;
Va ka nhonga ya ku chaya Makasela ntwana wa ka Hawuka;
Rikhotso, ta misava, ta nkambana wun'we;
Wu nwe byalwa wun'we wu nwe vuputsu;
Vakandziyi va timbowo ta Mbhatleko;
Va ka xokola tihlo wa Fungana;
Va ka matlhari yo tsimba hi thyeke va fela ku fuma;
Va ka n'waxandla xo hulela makhaxa;
Va ka n'waxindzawu xo tala hi vuhlalu ni vukosi;
Va ka mholombo va pela mixo va pela madyambu;
Va ka xikhalavatlana xa le ndleleni;
Lava yaka emananga ku ya dya xihongonyana;
N'wabyarhula n'wambya ta metolo;
Loko ti vukula n'wanhengana ti ku huuu...;
Hi hehe va ka Rivisi, Mahlase;
Hi Vadzonga hehe;
Hi va le nkwakweni;
Hihuma etiveni ra le Tluvutlulu;
Nqheche! Ubisi! Nqheche! Ubisi!"*

HISTORY OF THE VAHLAVE

Introduction

Vahlave (Nhlabi/Bahlabi) are the Tsonga tribe historically concentrated around and closest to the Khoseni district and also shared boundaries with the Vankuna from the late 1700s and into the 1800s. According to Junod (1912), Vahlave claimed the same place of origin in KwaZulu Natal as the Vankuna, who they shared boundaries with in southern Mozambique during the 1800s and 1900s. They are part of the groups who mostly used spears during their early occupation in Mozambique before 1800, which made them more prone to be challenged by oncoming Nguni groups who preferred to launch their attacks against earlier groups who used spears.

Earliest Traces

According to oral accounts, the Vahlave appear to have headed to Mozambique from the Natal area, possibly in different waves during the late 1600s to early 1700s. They are closest related to Vankuna and seem to have originated from the same area within the north of KwaZulu Natal. The Maswanganyi and Mavunda groups are believed to have been part of the Mazibuko clan when they were still living in KwaZulu Natal.

The Vahlave were constituted by different lineage groups in Mozambique. In southern Mozambique they were also found near the southernmost part of the Limpopo River between the Valoyi, Mbandze and Nyantumbu groups. Recorded history states that the Vahlave after their arrival in Mozambique fought against the Sono and N'wanati and as a reward received land from

the group of Novela at some time around the beginning of the 1700s (Jaques 1982 cited in Liesegang 2014a).

Southern Africa Migrations

Vahlave territory since the 1700s was mostly situated in Mozambique close to the Vadzonga, Vakhosa, Vabila, and Vahlengwe. Amongst Vahlave of Mozambique you also find groups of the Makhuvele who are also found amongst Van'wanati. Some of the Makhuvele (*va ka* Mugwena) joined the Xivumba tribe. The dialect spoken by Vahlave was very much similar to that spoken by the Vadzonga and Vahlanganu. From the confluence of the Olifant and the Limpopo rivers they were settled along as Maswanganyi, Tsungu, Mavundza, Nkwinika, and Makamu. Some Nkuna tribes were also settled close by (Junod 1912). Some of the Vahlave like the Makamu joined the Vacopi and Valenge communities (Earthy 1933).

Vahlave migrated to the Transvaal following the raids by the armies of Soshangane. They migrated to these areas in great numbers together with various groups of the Vakhosa and Nkuna. In the period after 1836, a large number of the Vahlave under Nyavani left the ancient Tsonga territory in Mozambique following heavy pressure from the Gaza State. They settled on Modjadji territory after inheriting land from the Lobedu kingdom. Some of the Vahlave settled with the Swazi.

Nyavani

Nyavani is reputed to have been a brave warrior and leader of the Vahlave during the wars against Soshangane and his State. He led his followers into

the Transvaal and away from the control of the Gaza Nguni after 1838. Nyavani's first wife was from the Valoyi clan. He is said to have had wives from the Mavunda as well and it is estimated he had eleven wives in total (Mathebula 2013).

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

The Vahlave have played a leading role in the regiments of the Balobedu and protected them from attacks from various tribes such as those from the Swazis and also from Tsatsawana in 1855. When the Balobedu were attacked the Vahlave were often at the forefront to repel the attacks. As a thankful gesture, the Vahlave were rewarded with land to settle on.

Vahlave leading royal houses were amongst the ruling confederation of clans to the West across the Limpopo River during the wars against the Gaza State. The leading groups in South Africa were comprised of various independent clans that led the major resistance against the Gaza State and the Boers and comprised mostly of some of the royal houses of Vahlengwe of Xigombe, Vahlave, Valoyi, Van'wanati, Vankomati, Vaxingwedzi, Vahlanganu, Vaxika, and other small tribes individually. Many of these shared close political ties with the newly-formed Xipilongo (Spelonken) district (Magwamba) under João Albasini towards the 1900s.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

Mavunda	Makamu
<div>N'wavisikwani II</div> <div> </div> <div>Mapheto</div> <div> </div> <div>Ndhambi</div> <div> </div> <div>Xihoko (- d.1920)</div> <div> </div> <div>N'wavisikwani</div> <div> </div> <div>Nyavani (mid 1800s)</div> <div> </div> <div>Xake</div> <div> </div> <div>Khomani</div> <div> </div> <div>Makuri</div> <div> </div> <div>Mbhatsana</div> <div> </div> <div>Mbyele</div> <div>(Mavunda)</div>	<div>Nkonwana</div> <div> </div> <div>Mavuse</div> <div> </div> <div>Makamu</div> <div> </div> <div>Nhlave</div>

Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Bungeni
Bvuma
Dzimba
Dzumeri
Mahori
Makamu
Makhongele
Marindzi
Maswanganyi
Mathye
Mavunda
Mawila
Mthimkhulu
Mthombeni

Ndhove
Ngove
Nhlongo
Nkanyani
Nkwinika
Novela
Ntshane
Nyavani
Thwala
Tshungu
Xivumba
Zava
Zitha
Zivuko
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) given by Lerisa Mabunda (1991 cited in Malungana 1994, p. 125):

*“Hi mina Lerisa Mabunda;
Ndzi nwana Hubu;
Hubu wa Mbhandheni;
Mbhandheni wa Nyavana;
Nyavana wa Xake;
Xake wa Khomani;
Khomani wa Makuri;
Makuri wa Mbhatsana;
Mbhatsana wa Mbyelet;
Mbyelet wa Xikhovetana;
Hi va ka marhaku makulu;
Ya ala ku tshama;
Ya lava ku tluntlama;
Hina hi va ka mbalata vuputsu;
Hi va ka N'wa-Masiya-byi-virile;
Hi va ka N'wa-Xikanu-kanu xa ku xava;
Hi va ka ntukulu wa Mbvhexa Ramudzimana;
Hi va ka teka niMaguvu ni Mandzevele’
Hina hi Vahlave hine;
Loko ndzi ku Xake;
Mi ku Mbhalati.”*

HISTORY OF THE VANKUNA

Introduction

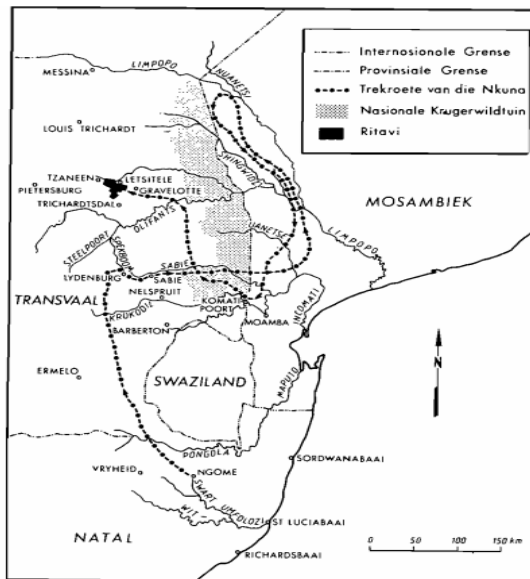
The Vankuna clan gained popularity during the reign of Muhlava, who afforded the Vankuna greater independence and autonomy amongst the Bapedi and Vatsonga. The Vankuna were able to integrate into the Vatsonga from an earlier time before the *Mfecane* of the 1800s, acquiring land, resources, stock, and belonging amongst the early Vatsonga and Balobedu groups (Boonzaaier 1985). They are some of the groups who came into the Tsonga areas with herds of cattle, which were rare among many of the earlier Tsonga people.

Although many of the Vankuna were opposed to Muhlava's leadership at first, they eventually came to accept his leadership when the Vankuna warriors finally agreed to recognise him as their rightful leader. During his installation Muhlava was given a royal welcoming by his people, which effectively marked his authority over the house of Nkuna (Junod 1927, p. 412).

Although some of them claim an affinity to the old lineage of the Ndwandwe, others fail to find a conclusive link between the two. The groups of the Nkuna and the Gaza of Soshangane are known to have been in conflict when Soshangane was beginning to assert his power in Mozambique at around 1838-1843. In 2008 their head chief Muhlava II expressed his opposition against a claim by the chief of Amashangane Tribal Authority to be recognised as a king in South Africa (Mopani News 2008). Hosi Muhlava II addressed a crowd in Tzaneen and pointed out that the Vankuna were never a part of the Gaza-Amashangane kingdom.

Earliest Traces

Vankuna left Ngome in the northern Natal region (Mathebula 2013). Boonzaaier (1985) also indicates that the Vankuna arrived in Mozambique from Ngome in the northern part of KwaZulu Natal. According to this account of their history, they travelled North at around 1720 and came into contact with the Valoyi who were already established in the area where they reached. The Vankuna then settled with the Dzonga groups on the outskirts of southern Mozambique and afterwards fled towards Tzaneen after the Ndwandwe wars of the 1820s.



Figuur 2 Nkunabeweging voor 1839

(Image Source: Boonzaaier 1985)

The Vankuna were resilient enough to sustain leadership within the clan by establishing alliances and marrying into the Vatsonga who they had established close relations with upon integrating into the Tsonga customs. This timespan marked their integration into the Tsonga culture as they came to follow the succession rites and also adopting the customary tattooing of the local Vatsonga.

Southern Africa Migrations

After leaving Ngome, the Vankuna moved into the Rikhotso and Khosa territories and expanded. During the 1820s, the Vankuna joined an alliance with Vahlave on the outskirts of the Limpopo. They afterwards joined the repulsion against the Gaza forces from the East and migrated to modern-day Limpopo Province together with the Vahlave after the invasion. They briefly formed an alliance with the Valoyi and Vahlave against the Gaza forces, but were defeated in a battle during the 1830s (Junod 1912).

When the Amashangane came into Mozambique during the 1820s they recognised the Vankuna as part of the Vatsonga (Boonzaaier 1985). Vankuna were approached by Soshangane and his army who tried to compel the Vankuna to join them on their pursuit of Zwangendaba, but the Vankuna ultimately did not find it in their interest to accept this so they fled Mozambique and by the 1900s had found safety amongst the Vatsonga and Bapedi who were already in today's Limpopo Province before 1839. Vankuna were easily accepted by the Vatsonga of the Transvaal as they had long established close relations.

In 1842 the Vankuna had been raided by Soshangane's warriors. Vankuna fled the area and settled close to the Drakensberg Mountains in Mauwe

where they found safety amongst the Balobedu (Boonzaaier 1985). Junod (1927, p. 253) states that he never witnessed any intention of the Vankuna to marry and assimilate into these groups who were related to the Bapedi, and adds that the Vankuna viewed the customs of the Bapedi as being “too disgusting” for them. They left the Pedi country in 1854 and settled in N’wamitwa where they came into contact with João Albasini who attempted to persuade them to join the Xipilongo (Spelonken) region under his command but their then leader, Xiluvana, did not accept this so they went to Bokgaga where they met fierce resistance from a neighbouring group of the Baswati. The Nkuna were again involved in another large battle and allied with the Valoyi, Lobedu, and Rikhotso in attack against Tsatsawana and the Tsaneni tribe. It was not uncommon of the Vankuna to join other forces such as Valoyi, Mavunda, and Rikhotso to fight battles on behalf of the Lobedu and the Rain Queen Modjadji. They were often awarded large benefits, such as land and cattle. The form of gratitude conveyed by the Balobedu sometimes involved sending their own army to revenge attacks carried out against the Vankuna. In 1859 the Nkuna are known to have been attacked by an army commissioned by Albasini and the Schoemansdal boers, with Muzila having taken part in the attack following his pledge of allegiance to Albasini who he sought the protection of in his war with his brother Mawewe.

Mabuse

Mabuse lived during the 1700s and was the leader of the Vankuna when they left Ngome in Natal and headed North through the Pongolo Hills. According to the analysis by Boonzaaier (1985) the group appears to have embarked on the long journey to the north into Mozambique at around 1720 to 1750 where they headed towards the N’wanati River which was

already settled by the N'walungu groups. Upon reaching the area they journeyed back south through to the Rikhotso and Khoseni district where they stayed until the area was raided by Soshangane's army in the 1820s.

Muhlava I

Muhlava was born in the year 1864 at Khoname. When his father Xiluvana died, he was only eleven years old. He is perhaps the youngest Tsonga chief to have began leading a tribe in the past 200 years in the known Tsonga history and was well respected and favoured by the Boers. Under Muhlava, the Vankuna line of succession was briefly threatened when the clan went into panic following the death of Xiluvana. It was apparently Xiluvana's wish that he should be succeeded by his son Muhlava, who was however not old enough to lead the clan according to the Nkuna headmen (Mathebula 2013). Shortly after this, the Vankuna again sought refuge amongst their long-time allies the Bapedi. In 1888 Muhlava was officially installed as a king of the Vankuna, and after 1904 when Muhlava was of reasonable age, Vankuna settled into their new tribal territory led by their new chief (Boonzaaier 1985).

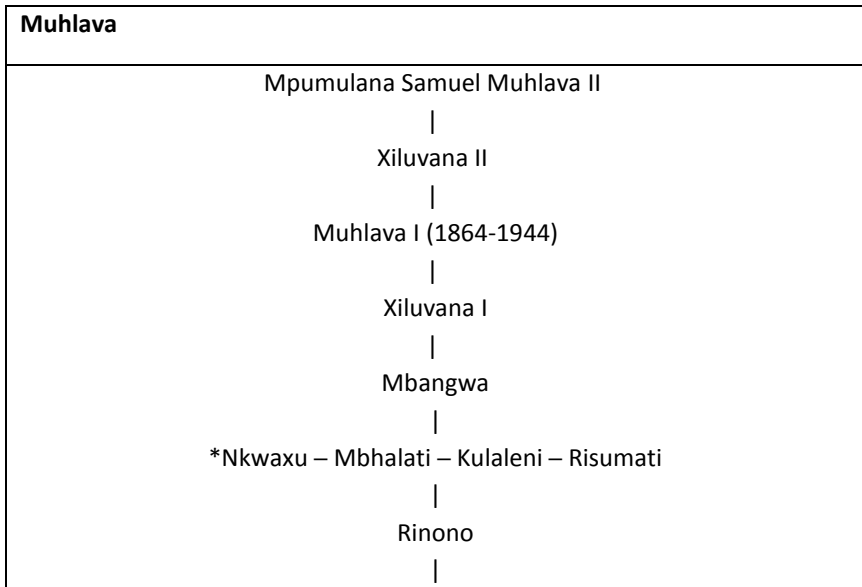
Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

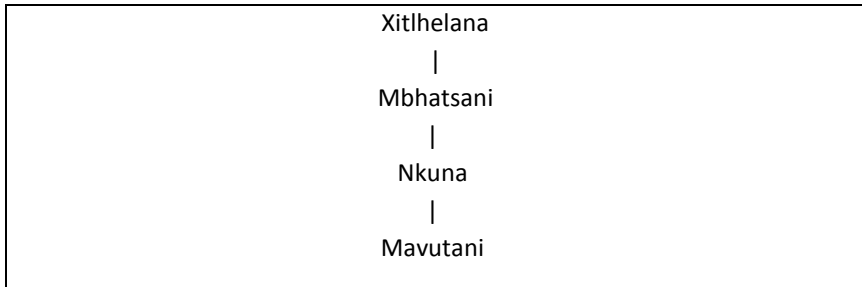
The unity and resilience of the Vankuna from the 1600s to the 1900s enabled them to secure the legacy of their clan. Through their dedication towards abstaining from the Gaza conflicts and by leading their clan away from forces that threatened their lineage, they were able to sustain the legacy of the Vankuna. They were able to form mutually beneficial

relationships with clans they could trust and they largely found this to favour them when they entered what is today the Limpopo Province.

The Vankuna contributed tremendously to the study of their traditions and cultural practices during the late 1890s to early 1900s after settling in within the Transvaal. A lot of the tribal practices and social life of the Vankuna were documented by the Swiss Mission and to a larger extent in the second publication of Junod's (1913) writings. Together with the Varhonga and other Tsonga tribes it was certainly through willingness to allow the history of their traditions to be studied in great detail and contributing to the preservation of Tsonga history.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)





Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Hoxani
Kulaleni
Mabuse
Magutsu
Malangana
Masisi
Maxele
Maxongana

Mbangwa
Mbhalati
Mbhatsani
Mbhenyane
Mbhungana
Mbhokota
Mboweni
Mhlarhi
Mhutanyana
Muxwana
Nhlangwini
Nkuna
Nkwaxu
Phakula
Ribye
Risimati
Xikwambani
Xiluvana
Xingange
Xingwenyana

Xipalana
Xithlelani
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) given by Makhurumela Solomon Xipalana (1990 cited in Malungana 1994, p. 134-135):

*“Hi mina Makhurumela Solomon;
Wa Mukhomazi;
Wa N'wa-Dzimanyana;
Wa Bangabanga;
Wa Murhonga;
Wa Dzungeni;
Wa Nkuna;
Wa Nyarhini;
Wa Xipalana.”*

*“Hi va ka Xipalana.
Lexo palamavuthu hi ku tlhela enyimpini.
Hi va ka N'wahatlana ni vurhonga loko byi tsuvuka.
Hi va ka N'wajekejeke ra milomu.
Hi va ka xiyimela vusiku hi ke'tlete,
Hi va ka ntlhanu wa tinyangwa na nyangwa yin'we,*

*Hi va ka rhaku rikulu ra N'wambinyela,
Hi va ka n'wankonzo lowukulu wo kandziya vanhu,
Hi va ka tamba hi ku xurha!*

*Hi va ka xisaka xa mimpfi lexo lwa xi ri xin'we!
Hi va N'watsindzinyani hi matlhari swithangu swi sala enyimpini!
Hi va ka Xitlhelana xi tlhela ni mavuthu enyimpini!*

*Hi va ka mi nga tlangeni-hi-ku tovana.
Tlangani hi ku teka vavasati mi andzisa tiko.*

*Hi va ka ntshimbyeni.
Hi va ka N'wambengwa ku hanya.*

*Hi va-baxi.
Hi va N'watshamela-ku-soriwa!
Hi vaseketeri va tinyangwa ta mabaxi!
Va Nyarhini va Ngomana etshimbyeni.*

*Hi va ka Nkuna wa Mavutana.
Hi va ka mavuta a swi twile.
Hi va ka N'wa Dzwambu wa N'wa-Phiri wa Ngomana.*

*Hi va ka Nkuna.
Nkuna lonene!
Nkuna lonkululu!
Hi va ka Xipalana wa Dzungeni,
Dzungeni, sibongo sihle!"*

HISTORY OF THE VAXINGWEDZI

Introduction

Xingwidzi (or Shingwedzi) is the clan name adopted from the area located at the far north of the Kruger National Park. Within this area is also the Shingwedzi River. This area is abundant in wildlife and gives testament to the resilience of the people who lived in this area. The territory was close to that of Vahlangu, Van'wanati, Valoyi, and the Rhonga. Not much is written about the people's earlier interactions within this area. "Vaxingwedzi" is the term used to describe the tribes that lived within this area before the relocations during the 1900s and it appears they are closest related to the Varhonga, Vaxika, and Vankomati groups. The Vaxingwedzi properly include the Chavalala, Maphophe, Mbhombhi, Homu, and Sigawuki lineages, among others.

Earliest Traces

According to Mathebula (2013), the Chavalala group led by Homu, including those of Siyandhani and Muswana settled at Man'ombe Hill after moving from Maila's Kop. The Risenga group also settled around the Ritavi area of Giyani. These settlements appear to have occurred after 1880. The tribes under Muswana had settled along the Xingwedzi River, and these people came to refer to themselves as Vaxingwedzi. They were however removed from these areas in order to convert the territory into a conservation area. They had earlier formed some of the armies of Spelonken in the late 1800s often under the command of Albasini.

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

Vaxingwedzi tribes such as those of Siyandhani, Homu, and Risingi formed a major part of the Xipilongo (Spelonken) (Magwamba) region. They offered military support as part of those referred to by others as the Magwamba army and were amongst the most active regiments during times of conflict.

The Vaxingedzi of Risinga were successfully returned tribal land around Giyani and the Manombe hills and nature reserves after chief Homu Chabalala submitted a land claim. The Risinga community was forcefully removed by the Apartheid regime during the 1960s in order to convert the territory into an administrative town for the Gazankulu homeland, and Risinga was renamed to “Giyani”. Xingwedzi Game Reserve lies in the areas that had been settled by these people.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

Madzivi
<div>Homu – Chavalala</div> <div> </div> <div>Xitlhangoma</div> <div> </div> <div>Madzive</div>

Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Chavalala (Chabalala, Shabalala, Tshabalala)
Homu
Maphophe
Mbhombhi
Muswana
Risinga
Sigawuki
Siyandhani
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) of the Chavalala tribe, cited from Wakahina.co.za (2016):

*“Xikorisi, Xihlana wa mhala xi ri ka nawuri,
Makhwita nhlavele mutwa wu ri kona enengeni,
Xifaki a va tshoveli, va tshovela timba.
Va ka xavani wa makume na madzana.
Mashava-shavani mashava hi rihunga,
va ku ximumu a va xavi ku xava va-kalanga.
Swikalakala swa mati, va Xingwedzi,
Hi vadyi va tihlampfi, va chabalala,
Vamchavi, mashengu, va-n’walungu!”*

HISTORY OF THE VALAMBYA

Introduction

Dispersed tribes of the Lambya clan are mostly found today in central and southern Mozambique. They are a small clan and include lineages such as Ngoveni, Mahlaule, and Xiringani. They can also be found in South Africa but they are very few. Even though there is not much research on them, they have relatively been able to recount some of their oldest oral traditions. They still recognise themselves as Valambya and today also regard themselves as part of the Vatsonga ethnic group in South Africa. The singular of the name is muLambya, which is how they often praise themselves and they can be found amongst various Tsonga tribal sections.

There is an area known as Massingire, which was under the ownership of a powerful group of the Lambya named Ngoveni or Ndzudule, sometimes referred to as Donduli. Interestingly, Massingire, the very area that defines the district, was not just an ordinary part of Ngoveni. Instead, it held a distinct identity as a sub-clan within the Ngoveni community, setting it apart from the rest of their clan. Living in close proximity to Massingire during that era were their neighbors, a subgroup of the Valoyi people known as Mongwe of Mpondzwana or Mbonduene. Interactions between these neighboring groups were common.

We learn that the Ngovene clan originally came from the southern parts of Africa before reaching out into Mozambique, where their roots were deeply embedded in some parts of the land that came to be known as KwaZulu Natal.

Earliest Traces

According to oral accounts about their origins, the Valambya believe to originate from the Eastern parts of Africa. There is a link to another group also known as the Lambya people who are mostly found in northern Zambia and a few in Malawi. There is a language and a group of people recognised as “Lambya” in the areas of Malawi, and according to a map of African languages by Steve Huffman (2016), these groups appear to have also been situated close to where the old Tonga tribes are believed to have settled near the Great Lakes region. There are still groups recognised as Lambya in those areas, and in Zambia they are known to speak a particular language which is also known as the Lambya language which dominates the north-east part of Zambia, which is different from Xitsonga.

Owen Kalinga (1978) identifies one ancestral king of the Lambya of Malawi as “Mwaulambya”, who appears to have lived during the 1590s to 1630s and gave rise to other Lambya tribes in those parts of Malawi. The author explains the history of those groups quite well, but no reference is given as to the movements and settlements of the Valambya who today constitute part of the Vatsonga.

Another language group in Zimbabwe speaks the “Nambya language” which according to Kadenge, Maxwell, and Phil (2010) is descended from the Kalanga group. The Nambya people of Zimbabwe are mostly found along the North-West parts of the country and have traditionally lived there possibly even during the times of the Kingdom of Great Zimbabwe. The Valambya of Ngoveni, however, are believed to have come from the south before reaching the area of Mozambique, with many of the Ngoveni claiming to have come from KwaZulu Natal before reaching the place known as Massingire in southern Mozambique, however their migration from KwaZulu

Natal and the period of settlement in Mozambique has not been properly recorded in history.

Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs.):

Gawula
Kombyani
Mahlaule
Mahonisi
Majosi
Mapengo
Mlambya
Muchaviya
Ngoveni
Nhlangwani
Ximange

Xiringani
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) of the Ngobeni tribe, cited from Wakahina.co.za (2016):

“I masiya yi govile

Yi govela vurhena

A ni nyeli a hlathini ni chava ku tlhaviwa

Ni nyela a ndleleni ni tshembha nkanu”

HISTORY OF THE VASHANGANE

Introduction

The Vashangane or “amaShangane” are the descendants of Manukuza Soshangane kaZikode. A lot of them recognise themselves as ‘Bangoni’ as part of the Ndwandwe lineage who separated from their brethren in KwaZulu-Natal.

The Ndwandwe of Soshangane’s tribe has ancestry in KwaZulu Natal and they also refer to themselves as “Amandwandwe”, “Amashangane”, “Bangoni”, “Amalala” or “Bagaza”, depending on the geographic location in which they are found today. They have taken up a few identities over the years but still recognising with the same lineage and today they mostly speak a dialect of isiNguni or Xitswa and Xitsonga in parts of Mpumalanga, Zimbabwe, and the Limpopo province. The Amashangane Territorial Authority is based in the Mhala district in Mpumalanga and the language there is much like that of the Tsonga people of Limpopo with subtle differences in dialect and adaptation, and others prefer to stick mainly to a Nguni language like isiZulu.

Various groups of the Shangaan tribe in Limpopo mostly speak Xitsonga as a first language, and some can also speak a Nguni second language. They are also known to speak in a dialect of isiLala, which features a common trait of dropping the “L” in place of a “Y”; for example Nxumalo may be pronounced as “Nxumayo”. Other dialects spoken by these people originate from their Nguni history, including dialects from the Tefuya and Zunda groups. Many of them in Limpopo actually identify themselves as Xitsonga-speakers in government statistics counts; and on the other hand, others who share the same last names may not even recognise themselves as either Tsonga or Shangaan. A Nxumalo in KwaZulu-Natal who identifies as a Zulu speaker, for

example, may be offended at being called a Shangaan, especially the younger generation who have been taught only of its derogatory status. This is because many of the Ndwandwes of Nxumalo in KwaZulu-Natal are not descended from Soshangane, even though they share the same patriarchal lineage down the line. The name Shangane, however, may not be such an offensive one to say the least and may in fact be much older than Soshangane himself.

Many of the Vatsonga in Limpopo today refer to themselves as Shangaan or "Machangani", owing in part to the historic subjugation of many tribes by Soshangane during the 1820-1850s and also from the popularity of the word in South African mines and cities during the 1900s (Anthony *et al.* 2011). The term "Amashangane" was very popular in South African mines and cities from 1890s to 1990s, usually as a derogatory word for "*ama shiya ingane*" ("those who left their children behind"). The older Zulus have mostly been aware of the tribal and historic identity of the real Ndwandwe Shangaans and some have used it in reference to actual affiliation by tribal lineage and not as a derogatory term. The term "*shanga*", however, exists in many different languages and had been used since very old times by different groups. To the Karangas, Ndaus, and other southern African groups "*ku shanga*" means to destroy. The Ndau people of central Mozambique even had one group known as the Mashanga long before the emergence of the amaShangane.

Earliest Traces

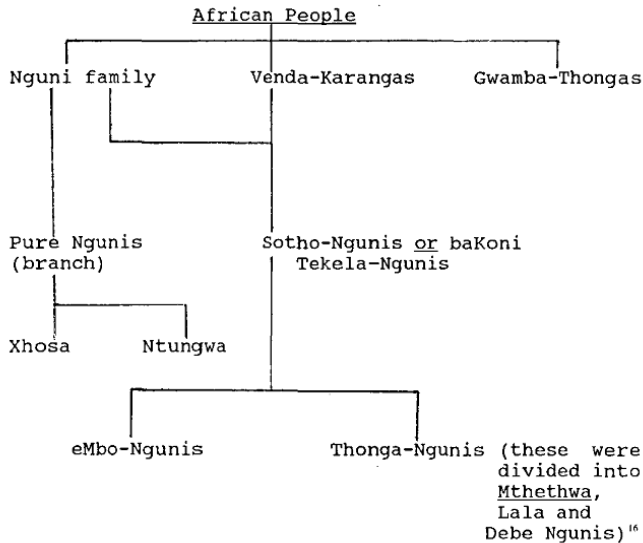
There is no clear consensus on when the Nguni groups migrated to the South of Africa. Most oral traditions and historical archives suggest that the Nguni cluster of tribes originated from northern and central Africa somewhere since the 1500s (Bryant 1965; South African History Online

2016, Mthethwa 1995). Migration history however tends to group everyone in terms of a single migration history and often ignores the fact that people of the same group can have separate movements and a unique settlement pattern.

The Ndwandwe are known to have interacted with the Vatembe and other '*Tekela*' groups within the Natal area during the 1600s-1700s in Natal, but the major interactions of the Gaza Nguni lineage with the Vatsonga of Mozambique and Limpopo began to occur during the 1800s.

According to Mthethwa (1995), the Lala, Debe, and Mthethwa tribes are descended from what he refers to as the Tekela-Nguni people who are an offshoot of the Ngunis who mixed with the Venda-Karanga and Sotho-Nguni group of tribes. Given the early history of the Nguni people it does seem possible that many amongst the Nguni are directly descended from the Karanga or Kalanga groups who as well have intermarried with the Venda and Thonga (Tsonga) people. The Xhosas, who are identified by Mthethwa (1995) as the pure Nguni branch, from an early stage established their own independence outside of the Zulu sphere of influence. The Ndwandwe and Mthethwa tribes lived side by side before the rise to power of the Zulu Kingdom and eventually both the remaining Ndwandwe and Mthethwas were absorbed under the rule of Shaka.

The family tree below indicates the different segments of Nguni lineage:



(Image Source: Mthethwa 1995)

The Zulu kingdom itself effectively rose as a small clan at around 1709 through Zulu kaMalandela (1627-1709), however, it should be noted that the Ndwandwe clan was not a part of the Zulu tribe and often the groups fought for dominance, particularly during the early 1800s at a time dominated by British political activities in the area. The old Ndwandwe lineage of Zikode appears to have been one of the subject tribes under Zwide ka Langa, along with other tribes such as the Khumalo tribe.

After establishing themselves within the Natal area the Banguni during the 1820s began to engage in internal squabbles that led to deadly wars, forcing

many tribes to break away in search for expansion, land, and resources (Cobbing 1988; Wright 2006). The remaining Nguni groups in Natal from the Mthethwa and Zulu clans were conquered under Shaka Zulu and became part of the Kingdom of amaZulu, while the rest remained independent or migrated to join or conquer neighbouring tribes. According to Maggs (1992 cited in Bandama 2013, p. 184) the Ndwandwe were engaged in trade with European sailors but during the reign of Shaka they were forbidden from receiving cattle for their metal works because Shaka Zulu did not want them to grow too powerful.

The Ngoni (Banguni) under Soshangane fled to Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and later came to be regarded amongst the Tswa and Ndzawu people by the Portuguese, after conquering and marrying into the already established Vatswa and Vandzawu, who included some of the Vahlengwe and other nearby groups in Mozambique. Other breakaway groups of the Ndwandwe/Bangoni who separated from Soshangane after 1830 fled to different parts of southern and eastern Africa, such as Tanzania, Malawi, and Zambia in search for refuge (i.e., Zwangendaba and Nxaba).

Southern Africa Migrations

The Amashangane have a history in Nongoma in KwaZulu Natal. They identify with the Ndwandwe tribe under Zwide. After their defeat from Shaka the Ndwandwe tribe broke away to raid other nearby tribes in a bid to re-establish their control. During the 1820s the Ndwandwe raided the native Vatswa who had already settled along the Inhambane area, subjugating many of the tribes either through persuasion or military attack (Liesegang 1970). The Gaza forces invaded the kingdoms of the Vahlengwe, Vacopi, and the Khoseni territories through Bileni, disrupting the lives of these people who had begun to form powerful independent trading states

along these areas (Junod 1912; Isaacman & Isaacman 1983). The Gaza assimilated into these groups and became a part of the people's life and language, however the Nguni polities initially gave precedence to the Nguni language and culture, which at first was held in higher regard to the existing cultural institutions of the people in their area of conquest, but were eventually overpowered by the more dominant Tsonga dialects and as well by many of the traditions.

South African history has in a way been distorted much as a result of the colonial period of the 1600s to 1900s. The 1800s were a period dominated by the large conquests that came as a result of the competition between African warlords who grew jealous over each other's expanding power and over access to trade opportunities and resources brought by the Europeans. Large-scale migrations of the Nguni and neighbouring tribes occurred after 1815 and large parts of southern Africa experienced raids from breakaway groups who met the full wrath of British influence in KwaZulu Natal. Much of the South African history focuses more on this period (the 1800s) as this was a time of great conflict (in particular the *Mfecane*) and for this many of the dominant warlords of the time have been praised for shaping the history and cultural landscape of southern Africa. Much of the prior history of the people of southern Africa has not been given much attention in most of South Africa's history. In fact Nguni history even in the 1700s in South Africa is quite of a mystery and even so during the mid-1600s when Europeans first settled in South Africa. The Afrikaners, who were the first Europeans to create formal settlements in South Africa during the 1650s, did not really bother themselves with recording much on the ethnic and cultural landscape of South Africa at the time. The rising influence of the British government over South Africa, such as approving 4000 European applicants to migrate to South Africa in 1819, was fully expressed through the *Mfecane*, a war period which greatly reduced much of the population in what is today KwaZulu-Natal as well as surrounding areas. Having been

motivated by the ideals of vast domination by the British, the Zulu tribe most certainly became one to lead by example.

In 1820 the strong Ndwandwe tribe led by their king, Zwide, were defeated by the Zulu tribe under Shaka at the Battle of Mhlatuze River. A group led by Soshangane, having also suffered defeat, were forced to submit under the Zulu Kingdom, upon which time they fled North via Swaziland where they were given safe passage by the Swati people, and Soshangane was even arranged a marriage with a Swati princess who would later give birth to one of Soshangane's sons, Mawewe (Mathebula 2013). The Xika were perhaps the first of the Tsonga tribes to be attacked by the Ndwandwes after refusing to pay allegiance to the determined tribe led by Soshangane. After the Shangaans arrived in Bileni, many other events transpired that ultimately assisted Soshangane to rise to notoriety in Mozambique during the 1820s and 1830s. For instance, groups led by Nxaba raided large parts of Mozambique in areas such as Inhambane, Xai-Xai, Manika, Kiteve, and Sena, and many of those who were under Nxaba later joined Soshangane in 1837 (Mathebula 2013). Another group led by Zwangendaba raided parts of Zimbabwe and northern Mozambique between 1825 and 1840. All of these conquests played a role in establishing the Ndwandwe's dominance over the region. According to Wright (2006, p. 12) the groups led by Soshangane, Nxaba, and Zwangendaba may have been motivated by "the desire to establish control over as slices of the fluctuating trade in ivory and the rapidly growing trade in slaves at Delagoa Bay", and that "Soshangane's polity became deeply involved in the slave trade from the 1820s onward".

The Ndwandwe tribe, however, had successfully escaped subjugation under the Zulu tribe by creating as much distance between themselves and the Zulu kingdom, much to the disadvantage of the tribes raided in the process. With the death of Shaka Zulu in 1828 Soshangane found it easier to make his permanent kraal in southern Mozambique, and with the help of his Nguni potentes, raised his kingdom to be notorious among the Portuguese

and indigenous people. It is not exactly clear when Gaza was formally established or began to be regarded as an actual kingdom in Mozambique.

Manukuza (Soshangane)

Manukuza (sometimes spelled as Manukosi or Manukuse) of the Nxumalo tribe was born at a time close to 1785 and was a Ndwandwe general amongst Zwide's army, and son of Zikode, sometime during the *Mfecane* period (the crushing/great scattering) between 1810 and 1820.

Manukuza's tribe and other smaller clans from the Ndwandwe branch of Zwide's kingdom at around the 1820s scattered from KwaZulu Natal to the distant areas of Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Swaziland, and forged new identities, all the while attempting to hide from the powerful Zulu kingdom under Shaka (Wright 2006; SA Tours and Travel 2016). Manukuza and his tribe fled from one area to the next in search for a new home. They found a place across the Save River in Musapa and in Chipinge, Zimbabwe, and further in the Tswa and Hlengwe heartland in present-day southern Mozambique where they established their capital that was later named after his grandfather, Gasa (Liesegang 1970). Junod (1912) identified the settling of such groups as that typical of "invaders". Prior invasions by different lineages with a history in KwaZulu Natal and other places had however taken place in prior years before the expansion of the Gaza Nguni, which indicates that the raids of the Ndwandwe after 1820 were not entirely a new dynamic to the social landscape of the Tsonga land. Different groups saw life amongst the Tsonga people as a place of refuge and better living conditions as compared to live among the Nguni, and with a long history of powerful groups asserting their dominance in those parts it would not be

too easy to establish a stronghold or a decent settlement without having a strong force.

Cobbing (1988) however explains how the *Mfecane* was much an alibi of instability in the southern African region, and Harries (1981) in his work titled 'Slavery Amongst the Gaza Nguni' reveals that the conquests of Soshangane, Nxaba, and Zwangendaba was highly motivated by the slave trade and that the Gaza kingdom grew rapidly as it was highly involved in such trading as a raiding kingdom. The authors explain that powerful kingdoms such as the Gaza/Ngoni kingdom under Soshangane were often used by outside forces to annex large territories under imperialism and for the control of vast resources, which were arguably the main reasons for the Ngoni expansion into places as far as Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Kenya, and Malawi (Wright 2006); and that this was not necessarily to plunder and rid of the pre-existing establishments but in essence to take over the intermediary role in the oceanic slave trade (Stapleton 2010, p. 14).

This new kingdom, that came to be known as Gaza, was involved in large-scale military conquests, and, having experienced new fighting tactics from Shaka Zulu's warriors, rose to emulate the dominance of the Zulu kingdom. Manukuza assumed the alias "Soshangane", and with fears looming over the Great Trek (Afrikaner migrations and skirmishes from the 1830s to 1880s that led to the defeat of the Zulu king Dingane and the founding of the Orange free State, Natalia Republic, and the Transvaal), Soshangane did not have a hard time convincing many tribes to support him, while others did not join his ranks at all. Raiding kraals were installed at various sections within southern Mozambique and Zimbabwe, which the Shangaans referred to as "*Shayimithi*" (sometimes spelled as Chaimiti), which means "home hitters/wreckers". Unlike the older Nguni traditional system of regimental battles that were fought by trained warriors at an agreed-upon place, the *Mfecane* period normalized among the Nguni the raiding of homes and unsuspecting communities. History indicates that the Nguni in years before

the last *Mfecane* were not very much inclined towards raiding distant communities to create large kingdoms, and their settlements were focused in one particular area where they ruled as clans or small households.

Smaller Tsonga tribes who were in Mozambique and Zimbabwe during 1820 to 1895 (e.g. Hlengwe territory, Nkomati river, and parts of Bileni, etc.) were raided if they refused to offer military support to the State; men were compelled to swear allegiance to the Gaza State as foot soldiers who were afforded better protection under the rule of taxation. Many of the Ndwandwe men also married wives from the subjected tribes. Many tribes that refused to support the Gaza State migrated to the Limpopo province to settle amongst the Vatsonga who had already established powerful kingdoms in the area; for example the people led by Njhakanjhaka, the Vankuna, and the Valoyi fled in great numbers.

The pronunciation of “machangana” is actually a mispronunciation and pollution of the word “Amashangane” by the Portuguese, whose speech and pronunciation replaced the “sh” with “ch”. A close analysis does show that the pronunciation of “Machangana” is of Portuguese origin, for example their lexical and verbal training made them pronounce Soshangane as “Sochangana”; *Shayimithi* was pronounced as “Chaimite”; Shaka was pronounced as “Chaka”; Xai-Xai was pronounced as Chai-Chai; and Somora Mashele was pronounced as “Samora Machel”. The history of the name, as already indicated, is properly pronounced and spelled as “Shangane” and the term did not even originate in Mozambique as many would think but in fact has an older history in Natal from where the Ndwandwe and Mthethwa tribes established their dominance at around the 1400s-1500s.

According to the geneology of Mthethwa chiefs as outlined by Muziwethu Mthethwa (1995), the name “Shangane” itself appears to have originally been a name of an older Mthethwa chief who was born in 1735 in Natal near the Lebombo Mountains (Lubombo/Ubombo) at least 50 years before Manukuza Soshangane was born (Mthethwa 1995). Junod (1912, p. 15) may

have alluded to the history of the name when he stated that “it is possible that this name was even older and that it belonged to a chief who lived in the valley of the Lower Limpopo before Manukosi”. What can be taken from this is that the name is much older than Soshangane and was used as a name (or nickname) for a chief of the Mthethwas who lived near the Lebombo Mountains of KwaZulu-Natal near Swaziland, who is today survived by the Ntemba Tribal Authority, and there does not appear to be any historical indication of the name being used to refer to the original Xitsonga-speaking people who branched out from various parts of Mozambique and Zimbabwe from the 1200s to 1700s. In essence the name Shangane or “Shangaan” was not used interchangeably to identify the Tsonga people until towards the 1900s after the Tsonga people were mixed into a common homeland with the Shangaans by the apartheid government and assimilation took place through language. Tsonga tribes had always identified with their own tribal and ancestral names such as Kalanga, Tembe, Valenge, N’wanati, Vahlengwe, Varhonga, Vahlanganu, Vaxika, etc. Many of them used the names “Tonga”, “Tjonga”, “Tsonga” to identify themselves under a common origin and a related group of languages (Junod (1912, p. 15), which came to be popularised by historians and Swiss Missionaries as “Thonga” (or amaThonga in reference to the Tembe by the Ngunis).

In its height of power at around 1890 the Gaza kingdom was the typical raid-and-subjugate establishment and was in the process of consolidating its power over the areas which had previously not been incorporated, including the Chopi, Lenge, Tongas of Inhambane, and Portuguese territories near the coast and towards the Limpopo. Gaza kingdom existed until its destruction by the Portuguese and native tribes in 1895, where breakaway sections moved away from their centre of authority and fled to settle under the Vatsonga under head authorities such as the Mhinga and other parts of Malamulele. The remaining Nxumalo tribal house under Mpisane settled at Mpumalanga province (Bushbuckridge) where they were accepted by their

followers who had settled there earlier. Today, this group is part of the Amashangane Tribal Authority and they mostly praise their tribe in a dialect of Nguni more preferably over Xitsonga (Malungana 1994). In South Africa they are arguably the most widely known tribe (or clan) amongst the nation of Vatsonga, mostly because of their origins in KwaZulu-Natal.

The Gazankulu Homeland in South Africa was established as a Bantustan around 1971 and was never really a part of the Gaza Kingdom of Mozambique and the two shared no political or tribal relation when it comes to territorial or tribal issues. Unlike the Gaza Kindom, Gazankulu was an Apartheid segregation system created under racially divided laws in order to segregate Black South African communities and away from the major cities, just like the other Bantustans that were enacted according to tribal affiliations. Gazankulu had no political connection with Mozambique or Gaza Kingdom and the confusion created by the naming does to an extent diminish the influence of the pre-history of the area because the area had been settled by various tribes which sought refuge away from the Gaza Kingdom itself.

When the Apartheid government made it difficult to recognise an independent homeland for the Tsonga people in the wake of the Bantu Authorities Act in 1951, what truly enabled the creation of the Gazankulu Homeland was the pre-history of the Tsonga people in that area and the determination of the Tsonga leaders to unite the people under a single language and culture. Before it was established as a Bantustan, and prior to the arrival of the Amashangane royal family from Mozambique, the homeland had been occupied by the Tsonga people who had settled there between the 1400s to 1700s, and as well by many of those who refused to subject themselves under Shoshangane and had fled from the Gaza Kingdom during the 1820s-1850s. The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 recognised the traditional authorities under legal restrictions and later after the enactment of the Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 the Gazankulu Homeland was to be granted as self-governing and was awarded semi-

independent status. After Hosi Mhinga led a campaign to Pretoria to fight for the recognition of a separate homeland for the Tsonga people, the Amashangane in Bushbuckridge asked for compensation to be incorporated into the Bantustan and this gave particular advantage for the groups to somehow forge a double-barrel unity under the identity of Vatsonga-Machangana. The “Gaza” in Gazankulu was in any case given to give credit to what was seen by some traditional leaders as one of the biggest kingdoms that had emerged in the history of both the Nguni and the Tsonga, which played a leading role in the unification of many of the older tribes that were perceived to have been decentralized.

Mzila and Mawewe

After Soshangane died, Mawewe ruled as the tribal leader of the Gaza State from 1858 to 1864. In 1859 Mawewe led an attack against Mzila and his family, aiming to destroy their lineage in fear of rumours that the people of Gaza do not recognise his authority (Mathebula 2013). Mzila and his family soon after fled to what is today the Limpopo province and found protection from João Albasini of the Xipilongo (Spelonken) region. Mzila had the support of some of his *ndhuna* (headmen) and was favoured by many within the Gaza State. Mzila later on also gained the support of the Portuguese and João Albasini, who by proxy enabled the defeat of Mawewe during a civil war from 1861 to 1864, allowing the installing of Mzila as king of the Gaza Amashangane State. After the civil war, Mawewe fled to Zimbabwe and assumed the alias “Chigara”, blending in amongst the Shona and Ndebele people. Mzila ruled the Gaza Amashangane State unchallenged from 1861 to 1885. Mawewe later fled to Swaziland and was sheltered by his brother-in-law, King Mswati, who offered a sanctuary for the group. Mawewe’s tribe eventually adopted the name of their forefather, Mkhathshwa (Mathebula 2013).

During the entire 71-year Gaza turbulent many of the Vatsonga (then known by their clan names or Varhonga and Vatonga) who were unconquered “always remained independent from the Ngoni chiefs, being directly under the Portuguese authorities” and being under their own traditional leaders in Mozambique, and also being led by their own tribal authorities (while semi-independent from the Apartheid regime) within the Transvaal (Junod 1912, p. 27; Mathebula 2013, p. 91).

Nghunghunyani

Nghunghunyane’s real name was Mdungazwe and he was born at some time around the year 1850. He was king of the Ngoni Gaza State after Mzila until it collapsed in 1895. The Gaza kingdom was destroyed in 1895 in a battle against the Portuguese and the Chopi people during the reign of Nghunghunyani, who was the son and successor to Mzila.

According to Isaacman and Isaacman (1983, p. 24) Nghunghunyane entered into a treaty with British agents who worked for Cecil Rodes, at which time the Gaza kingdom received 1000 rifles and 20 000 cartridges. It is shown that the Gaza kingdom also made secret pacts with the Swati and Ndebele kingdoms in its pursuits to establish control over the southern parts of Mozambique.

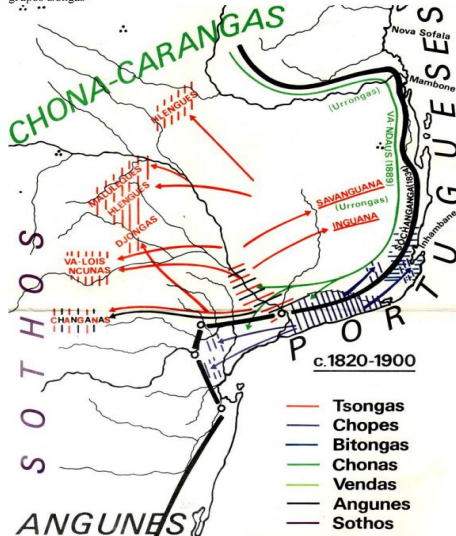
The Chopi people (Vacopi) had remained rebellious to the dominion of the Gaza kingdom for a long time and had refused to give up their independence and territory as the Gaza forces were preparing to strengthen their dominance towards the east and south. In 1888 Nghunghunyane led a campaign and invaded the land of the Chopi people near the Limpopo River as he intended to extend the influence of the Gaza kingdom over into the region of Manjakazi and the Limpopo River, and

having both sides being heavily armed, all sides suffered great losses during the conflict. This war became what is known as the Battle of Manjakazi (Mandlakazi). Some of the main Chopi and Lenge ruling houses that stood in defiance against the Gaza were the Bahule of the Langa lineage under Makupulana, the Mondlane under Bingwana and his son Xipenenyana, and the Zavala lineage near Inharrime River. Makupulana and Bingwana were killed during Nghunghunyana's campaigns in parts of Chopiland.

The conflict in a broader perspective of the entire southern African region appears to have been somewhat of a proxy war, on the one hand the British who are seeking to establish their dominance over the territory over South Africa in addition to Rhodesia and supporting Nguni states such as the Zulus, Ndebeles, and the Gaza forces with military aid and secret treaties; and on the other hand the native Rhonga (including the Tembe) and the Chopi people who had been under Portuguese colonial administration for quite some time. The Tembe branch based in the north of KwaZulu Natal succumbed to the British influence when the British flag was allowed to stand in their territory under the pretext of a protectorate, only to have that part of Tembe territory to be later annexed into Zululand and then incorporated into the British colony of South Africa while the other part of the Tembe territory of Maputo in Mozambique remained under the Portuguese colony.

Due to the Gaza wars of the late 1800s and a lot of the Gaza people disappointingly losing faith in the survival of the State, many of the people began to desert the land to flee for greener pastures. Nghunghunyane had even been abandoned by his uncle Nkuyu, who foresaw nothing but the eminent downfall of Gaza. According to Junod (1912, p. 27) in 1890 there remained "not more than a few hundred" of the Ngoni Shangaans in the country, but that "they were holding it very firmly and the Thonga hated them". Harries (1981) may have touched on many of the reasons why animosity grew strong between the two groups.

Figura 2: Carta geográfica sobre a invasão nguni ao Sul de Moçambique e as migrações de grupos tsongas



Fonte: Ferreira (1982)

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(Image: Ferreira (1982) shows the settlements and movements of Tsonga and nearby groups after the period of the *mfecane* in the period 1820-1900. The Vadjonga of Khosa and Manganyi, the Valoyi, Hlanganu, Nkuna and Maluleke pushed further west but had long been established respectively in the now Kruger National Park, Lebombo Mountains, and parts of the Limpopo province before the year 1800.)

Battles were fought near and within Inhambane in 1886, and later on in 1889 when Nghunghunyane moved to the south. Strong stockaded villages (known locally as *tikhokholo*) allowed for an aggressive military resistance by the Tonga of Inhambane and the Chopi, where the Gaza Nguni forces were often sent into retreat from areas nearer to the coast. In the year 1889, after Nghunghunyane decided to settle on the Mondlane territory, Mbingwana was killed and his son Xipenenyane Mondlane then fled with a few thousand of his followers to Inhambane where he sought the protection of the Tonga warriors and Portuguese governor (Liesegang 2014a, p. 195). Xipenenyana's ultimate return to the Mondlane state was during the final battles and he took part in the ending battle of 1895.

For five years Nghunghunyane had remained persistent and those few hundred men who remained loyal to him managed to protect his installations, which were being slowly approached and encircled from different sides by military forces. After his defeat at the hands of the more militarily powerful Nghunghunyana, Xipenenyana himself returned from Inhambane accompanied by a large military wing in opposition of Nghunghunyane's settlement at the Mondlane territory. On September 1895, Portuguese forces penetrated the Khoseni district, which had become one of the main territories of the Gaza State. N'wamantibyane, a Rhonga chief who had rebelled against the other Rhonga chiefs, turned his back on the Portuguese and spirals into direct conflict with them over labour disputes and is eventually defeated, upon which time he flees to the protection of the Gaza-Ngunis but however leads the Portuguese directly to Nghunghunyane (Mathebula 2013).

Nghunghunyani and two of his sons, Godide and Buyisonto, were captured and exiled by the Portuguese in 1895. Nghunghunyani and Godide later died in exile in the Portuguese Azores while Nghunghunyani's other son, Buyisonto, and his uncle Mpisane, were spared and fortunate to acquire land in Bushbuckridge where some of their followers were settled. Today

these settlers fall under the Amashangane Tribal Authority in the Mhala District of Mpumalanga. The Gaza kingdom was left defeated in battle and its domination and influence disintegrated as time entered into the 1900s. Nghunghunyane succumbed to haemorrhagic sickness during his exile by the Portuguese a short period after his baptism.

Conservational Involvement and Tribal Affinity

The Shangaan Cultural Village based in Mpumalanga towards the Kruger National Park was named in tribute to the Shangaan people. The place was established to preserve the culture and history of the Shangaan people and today also serves as a tourist destination for travellers and those visiting the areas around and nearer to the Kruger National Park.

Ndwandwe occupation in parts of KwaZulu Natal shows a history of early trade along the coastal areas where ivory, beads, and plant items were traded. Groups of the Ndwandwe, much like with many other African groups, developed a vast culture of trade and occupation and much cultural elements of the Nguni were affected by the importation of iron, cloth, and beads.

Example Royal Succession (subject to correction)

Nxumalo
<div>Mpisane II</div> <div> </div> <div>Mafemani</div> <div> </div> <div>Kheto Nxumayo</div> <div> </div> <div>Buyisonto</div> <div> </div> <div>Mdungazwe (Nghunghunyane)</div> <div> </div> <div>Mzila</div> <div> </div> <div>Manukuza/Soshangane (1785-1858)</div> <div> </div> <div>Zikode</div> <div> </div> <div>Gasa</div> <div> </div> <div>Makweya</div> <div> </div> <div>Manukuza I</div> <div> </div> <div>Mkhatshwa</div> <div> </div> <div>Ndwandwe</div> <div> </div> <div>Nxumalo</div>

Surnames and Tribal Houses

Here are some common surnames and tribal houses (Note: Assimilation in southern Africa has been occurring for over a thousand years, so not all people with the following surnames will identify with the particular clan name or even the Xitsonga customs):

Buyisonto
Choveti
Dumakuyo
Dumayavo
Gija
HlaBangwane
Hlabathi
Langa (Yanga)
Mabaduye
Mabesa
Madonsela
Magona
Masiya

Masuku
Mdluli
Mdungazwe
Mkhatshwa
Mkhonto
Mpisane
Mudanisi
Musayeya
Muyanga
Nguyuzo
Nkuyu
Nxumalo
Nyamandi
Savangwana
Thulamahashi
Yingwana
[...etc.]

Example Clan Praise

The following is an example of family praise poetry (Xitlhokovetselo/Xiphato) given by Sipho Nxumalo (1990 cited in Malungana 1994, p. 174):

*“Bayethi nkosi yaManxumalo;
Bayethi Nxumalo waZwide;
Hosi ya va ka Ndwandwe;
Hi vula we Eric msaka Mafemana;
Ntukulu wa Nghunghunyana;
Hosi ya Vangoni;
Va ka nhlampfi-a-hi-dyi;
Wena nghunghunya abafazi nemadoda;
Wena nkosi yakithi!
Wena wendlovu!
Wena wo nghunghunya aManxumalo;
Bayethi ka ku busa;
Ka ku ba nkosi;
Ilapha eza kenetezeka;
Ijuba lahlala emithini;
La wisa buxo anaqili asiwaziyo;
Nhangu ntwana kaNdwandwe;
Bayethi nkosi yakithi.”*

NOTES ON EARLY AFRICAN COLONIAL HISTORY

This research and analysis has yielded some very important insights not only into the history of the Tsonga people but also about the history of southern Africa as a whole and the representation of such history in academic books and modern literature. What this analysis has helped to determine is that in the context of colonial history in southern Africa the Tsonga people, like with neighbouring groups such as the Nguni and Karangas, have largely been the victims of a colonial divide and conquer system that is prevalent amongst many other African groups, and is a system that obviously included the division and dispossession of land. The representation of the history of the Tsonga people in various sources often paints a picture of a nation that is totally unrelated and divided along tribal lineages. The present research, 'History of Xitsonga-speaking Tribes', searches deeper for an alternative perspective and sheds some light on the historical foundations of the Tsonga people as a nation and ethnic group with its own unique language, culture, and heritage. This work has been able to make connections that many have failed to make, and has shown how the interconnectedness of the Tsonga people gives a description of how language and cultural groups form without the need for a centralized system of power.

Xitsonga-speaking tribes from a very early period had an interrelated social structure regardless of the notions that discard this fact. For instance it would be inaccurate to assume that any one ruling lineage such as the Bila, Nkuna, Maluleke, Valoyi, or any other lineage settled at a particular tribal territory had only their own family members living there. Such clans obviously had many subjects of different lineages who made it in fact hard to distinguish them from the leading royal house. When attacking an enemy, these groups of different lineages would tend to attack together in defense of their homes, and it was not uncommon for people of a particular totem or lineage to be attacked by groups who had subjects of the same lineage as

them. The Cawuke in Mozambique, for example, had many subjects of the Valoyi and it so happened that the Cawuke were involved in many wars against outside groups of the Valoyi. The Cawuke armies did not consist of warriors from the Cawuke lineage alone, that would be very unlikely. The Tembe as another example ruled over a very large stretch of land starting from the southernmost parts of Mozambique and heading into the northern parts of KwaZulu Natal. In addition to their own language group the Tembe had subjects from a mixed variety of ethnic groups such as the Swazi, Ndebele, Karanga, and the Sotho among many others who all identified as an integral part of the Tembe community. This is an indication of the interconnected nature of the Xitsonga-speaking groups and others all over Africa in the past centuries. It is a perspective that today makes for an interesting look at how groups today claiming a different place of origin eventually came to be counted among the Xitsonga-speaking tribes.

Through the parts of social interaction that are often not looked at in history, these previously distinct groups eventually came to identify with a particular set of customs and traditions and they all learned to speak in a similar way and this gave way for the emergence of a common identity distinct from others. In many instances in the past years history had been written insufficiently and with a lack of proper analysis at the more social and psychological aspects of reality, and this tended to paint a very tainted picture about how African tribes associated with each other and their particular extent of familiarity and sense of unity.

This present research also touches on topics that may be deemed to be sensitive and particularly the history of African slavery. With regards to the indigenous groups of Africa, slavery was cast upon them from very early times since the first Arab invasions of Africa, through to the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British conquests of the early 1400s to 1800s respectively (Mungur 2013). Among the local indigenous people of Africa, it comes across that the most domineering of African tribes were the most

targets to be accessed to enforce the rule of control over large parts of land across African territories, and a lot of such African tribes indeed perceived themselves as the “superior” masters who had precedence over their subjects, playing directly into the hands of the guarantor. This perspective is evidenced by the history of the “raid mentality” that flourished more than ever from 1600 to the 1800s at a time dominated by European mining activities and political conquests, and what is often referred to as the “Scramble for Africa”. On this note, it would only be in the interest of academic justice to shed light on the events that shaped the landscape of southern Africa and the growth of industrialization on the larger African continent with the creation of mining hotspots. It would be biased to assume the innocence of any particular group, and thus no influential African tribe was immune from the temptations of the great wealth that came from the seas. It is the aim of this research to also highlight some of the events that gave power to the advancement of colonial forces and bringing up such topics is important so as to learn from the history and to prevent a repetition of past injustices.

An important European perspective on the *Mfecane* skirmishes, for example, gives evidence to the primary driving force behind the Nguni ambitions of the 1800s, namely Junod (1912, p. 333) who writes of the “*Bantu*” and regularly mentions them in his book as “kaffirs”, points out that the pursuit of vast domination was quite foreign to South Africa:

“The idea of conquest, of vast dominion, the system of an armed nation which Chaka and his followers pursued, was something new amongst South African natives and was possibly borrowed by Dingiswayo from the Whites. This fact ought not to be ignored. Under a just European supervision, there is no probability that the Thonga tribe will change its peaceful and mild character”.

Another important perspective, this time by Mthethwa (1995, p. 43) on the same issue with regards to the beginning phases of the *Mfecane* points to a similar narrative:

“Dingiswayo was eager to go along with that umlungu in an effort to reach his home. It is during this association with Dr Cowan that Dingiswayo was instructed in the innovative ways of the white man in military, governmental and trading matters.”

The European colonisers did unfortunately succeed in breeding the ideal social and political system to divide and conquer the vulnerable ethnic groups of southern Africa and, indeed Africa as a whole. The sad reality is that the tactic of divide and rule is still being used to this day in other conflict areas, such as the Middle East and northern Africa where large masses of people are being displaced due to war, and human traffickers and warlords are left to exploit the helpless and defenceless people. It is therefore important to understand this fact in order to learn from history, as turning a blind eye from addressing the issues will do no better than to promote the injustices of oppression as associated with such reality of the colonial history.

Beginning from the period of Arab, Portuguese, and British settlement in Africa, groups of the Karanga, Tonga, Sena, Tsonga, Nguni, Makuha, and many others had responded minimally to the Asian and European invasions in comparison to their own internal conflicts as a whole in the grand scheme of Africa as a continent.

In terms of the history and cultural significance of the Xitsonga-speaking people of South Africa, the conclusion of this analysis is then that the Tsonga people share a bond through lineage, culture, language, and that the separation and identification with clan names has inadvertently led to the people forgetting this old African bond. The people's dependence on the missionary work of religion in the 1800s has led to a time of great forgetting

and this has left a void for exploitation. The work of the Swiss Mission has, however, done a lot to preserve the history and language of the Tsonga people, however these missionaries only wrote according to what they could see and what they were told. Oral and folk traditions have largely been replaced by this history and this has led many to disregard the Tsonga cultural identity as a product of the Swiss Mission, which is another indication of the ills brought by the colonization of Africa.

The events of 1816-1896 in southern Africa were certainly not unique to the history of internal conflict among the people. The Tsonga dialects and material culture outlasted much of the military conquests of the Mutapa, the Portuguese, the British, and the South African Apartheid government. Historical narratives through documented records, even though largely dominated by European research, can provide vital information which is often directly overlooked by African academics and scholars. Velez Grilo (1958, p. 111), for example leaves an important remark on the impact and sustainability of this history:

“The disintegrating influence of the wars of the last century in the Buldo Save district, contrary to what has been said, had a minimum effect on the peoples baRonga, vaLenge, maKambani, baTonga and baTswa, and, that, just as the language was preserved (see Junod), so were also the clan structures and particularly their nomenclature.”

The Tsonga identity is very much a reality in today's life, as it has always been from as far as the people and history can trace (Mathebula 2013), and it is very much a creation of the Xitsonga-speaking people in as much as it has been a creation of the Swiss Missionaries who documented the people's history and their language. The Tsonga identity is one of the oldest African identities with a rich heritage and a strong cultural foundation that has stood the test of time and has endured through its times of trial and tribulation. There were obviously Tsonga groups in different parts of South Africa in the 1500s long before South Africa was colonised by Europeans,

and in Mozambique they show a very old occupation with a set of very related traditions, language, and dialects. Many cultural identities in Africa were formed by the gradual assimilation of tribes over time, as with the Xhosa, Makuha, Nyai, and many other ancient groups that were formed through various waves of assimilation.

SUMMARY

The following points can sum up what is meant by “Tsonga”, “Vatsonga”, “Vutsonga”, and “Xitsonga”:

- Where language is concerned, the word “XiTsonga” was favoured as a grouping including the languages Xitswa and Xirhonga to classify a set of related dialects under a common learning system that was labelled “Tswa-Rhonga”. Xitsonga in written form is therefore a standardised language much like Chivenda, isiZulu, isiXhosa and others, but the primary language spoken by the Tsonga people encompasses various tribal dialects that form the basis of Xitsonga as a unified language. Many of the Xitsonga dialects predate the arrival of missionaries in Africa.
- The Xitsonga language has been around for a very long time, and was already well developed during the 1500s. One reliable source of information about the age of the Xitsonga language exists in the names of the forefathers of the early Tsonga clans. Missionaries such as Henri A Junod attempted to identify a unified name for a language intended to be used as a basis for teaching the Christian doctrine, so the missionaries lived amongst the people to learn about their social and psychic life and came to learn that the Tsonga people identify by various tribal names based on location, or the name of an ancestor, but that they converged on the name sounding ‘Thonga’ to the missionaries, including such names as Varhonga, Vadjonga, Vadonga, and Vatsonga (Junod 1912). The language was eventually registered as Xitsonga in the Constitution of South Africa.

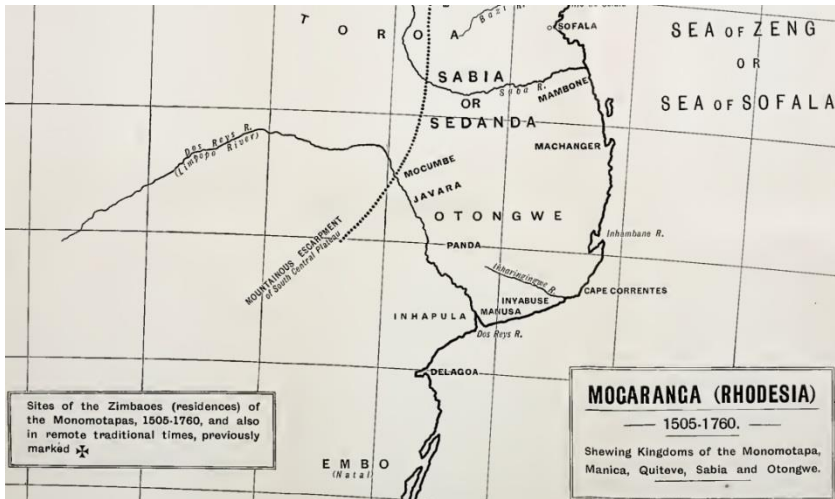
- The Xitsonga-speaking people are a group of clans that have assimilated into a particular cultural identity that began to form from a time during the great people migrations out of eastern Africa. As a whole they do not follow the traditional system of a central king or queen, as each clan is governed through independent tribes that coordinate on mutual affairs from time to time. Tsonga ancient customs also hold that social leadership does not cross territorial or tribal boundaries, such the saying “*Vukosi a byi peli nambu*” to mean “traditional leadership does not cross into another tribe’s territory”. This is more of the original African way of doing things for many Africans before emperialism shipped to African soil and re-organised the social, political, and cultural landscape of the continent.
- When one uses the word *Vutsonga*, they are actually taking into consideration the whole of Africa, effectively referring only to the “Eastern part” of it. The term is used by Tsonga groups that speak a dialect of the Xitsonga language in southern Africa to refer to themselves as people of the east. These people have over many centuries assumed a particular social and psychic way of life distinct of other nearby ethnic groups. *Vutsonga* also refers to the way of life of adhering to Tsonga customs and traditions. “*Vutonga*” in the Xilenge language of southern Mozambique, for example, refers to “east” in much the same way “*Vuronga*” refers to the east in the Ronga language of Maputo and other parts of southern Mozambique.
- There are five main *Vutsonga* language groups that form the original cluster of tribes: (1) the Tonga (of Inhambane Province and related to the Chopi and Lenge), (2) the Ronga (of southern Mozambique and the Lubombo mountains), (3) the Tswa (of Hlengweni and Inhambane, Mozambique), (4) the Tembe (of

KwaZulu-Natal), and (5) the Tsonga (of the Limpopo province and parts of southern Mozambique). All tribal sub-dialects link back to these main groups. Xitsonga is a product of all these language groups, while the Xitsonga (*Ririmi ra manana* or 'mother tongue') phonetic system and grammatical forms in early missionary work are academically based on the permutations of the Van'walungu, Vahlengwe, Vahlanganu, and Vabila groups (compare with: Junod 1912, p. 470–473). The first Christian books in Xitsonga in the Spelonken, however, were initially written in the Xidjonga dialect. The Xitonga of Inhambane, otherwise known as Gitonga, is an ancient form of the language related to old Xicopi that came under the influence of Semitic features (Rita-Ferreira 1959, p. 59) and can today be considered a distinct language.

- The word "Rhonga" is mainly used around the coastal areas of Mozambique to refer to the Tsonga people around that area. "*Vurhonga*" has been used to refer to "the east", or "the dawn". Varhonga have been an integral part of the history of the Tsonga people along the coastal areas of South Africa and Mozambique, with the Mpfumo for example, being among the first native speakers of the Ronga language.
- The *Vutsonga* way of life incorporates one particular traditional strategy of naming their groups according to the geographic location in respect to other Vatsonga groups or some unique quality about the group. This strategy effectively made it hard for foreign groups to eliminate or otherwise assimilate the Vatsonga group in entirety. Also, Tsonga customs hold the belief that if a person "crosses over" to land belonging to a particular Vatsonga group, the person is bound to the social and cultural structure of that group and should follow the rules of the tribe's chief or traditional leader. This is how so many previously distinct groups

that raided parts of Tsonga territory eventually adopted the Tsonga language and much of the traditions.

- The word Thonga used in old missionary books actually relates to both 'Tonga' and 'Ronga'. Therefore 'Vatonga' appears to have been the proper historic pronunciation for many of the Tsonga tribes who today identify with this name, in addition to many of those who used it in the 'Ronga' dialect as 'Vathonga'. The alternate spelling of "Thonga", according to some beliefs, is a transition between the Tsonga and Nguni languages (Junod 1912). Ronga for example has also been written with an added 'h' as "Rhonga". The Ronga language, unlike other Tsonga dialects, sometimes pronounces certain words with an "r" in replacement of the "t"; for example Rhonga speakers would say "*rjuka*" (ant-hill) whereas the N'walungu speakers would say "*tshuka*". The word "*Vuronga*" itself, which means "East" or "dawn", was possibly the product of a dialectical shift between the Kalanga or Karanga and the old Tonga people.



(Image source: Hall 1909. In the southernmost parts of Mozambique are seen the old kingdoms of Vutonga (“Otonwe”) all located near the Limpopo River, namely the Kingdom of **Nyapula/Nyapura** (indicated as Inhapula) which today is found in the places of Mugude and Khoseni areas; the Kingdoms of **Manusa/Manuse** and **Nyabuse** (indicated as Inhabuse) where today is the areas of Xai-Xai and Manjacazi; the Kingdom of **Panda** where today is in the areas between Mabalani and Chibuto; the Kingdom of **Javara** in the east of the Limpopo River near today’s Mabalani; and the Kingdom of **Mukumbe** (indicated as Mocumbe) to the east around today’s Mapai.)

- As regards the meaning of Thonga, the idea that had been popularised was that the term “Thonga” meant “slave” (Junod 1905), though this idea was debunked and had been largely popularised by the Gaza-Nguni during the 1800s and 1900s and after the Swiss Mission witnessed the history of the conquests of Soshangane that the Gaza-Ngunis did not associate themselves with their captives because they saw those people as their captured slaves. The term ‘Tonga’ on the other hand has different meanings in different languages, depending on the language and geographic location. In the Zambian and Zimbabwean contexts there is the belief that ‘Tonga’ was given to people in those areas by the Karangas to refer to them as grumblers, people who resisted against the authority, and to mean people who were independent of the Mutapa. In the Shona language “*kutonga*” means to govern or to rule, and ‘*mutonga*’ means governor/ruler. To other African groups also known as Tonga, for example in Malawi or northern Mozambique at Sena the name Tonga could have a different origin; perhaps it is the old name of African tribes or the name of a distant ancestor.

On the other hand in the Xilenge dialect of Chopi in southern Mozambique ‘*vutonga*’ translates directly to ‘the east’ (Smyth & Matthews 1902, p. 42), which gives the same meaning of *vrunga* (east) in the Ronga language:

<p>n T¹LATUKO (mumi), the far shore of a stream</p>	<p>vu TONGA, the East = vuCani TOBA (dima) = Toha, thirst</p>
<p>ku TLAVA, ⁽¹⁾ to pierce; ⁽²⁾ (of</p>	<p>ku TOTELA, to be patient, long-</p>

Other oral traditions hold that ‘Tonga’ is a corruption of the word ‘donga’ which refers to people who lived by the side of a river like river trees, which appears to be an older explanation that speaks of the earliest migrations before recorded history. We see then that

the meaning of the term depends on the context to which it is being referred. Junod (1912) even suggests that the alternative pronunciation 'Thonga' in KwaZulu Natal was applied by the Ngunis who could not pronounce the 'R' in Ronga, thus the Maputo and KwaZulu-Natal groups of the Ronga were called "amaThonga" instead of "Varhonga" by the Zulus. Junod (1905, p. 223) explains his own understanding of it:

"According to some, Thonga does not mean in itself 'slaves'. It was only the Zulu pronunciation of Ronga. Indeed, the sound r of the Ba-Ronga of Lourenço Marques becomes th in Zulu. The meaning of slaves was added to the name Thonga when the Ba-Thonga were conquered by the Zulus and enslaved by them. If that etymology is correct the appellation of Thonga could not be objected to any more. Ba-Ronga means 'men of the east or of the dawn'."

Earthy (1933) in her book also records that the word "*Vutsonga*" to the Lenge and Chopi people of southern Mozambique has the same meaning of 'East' (*eVuxeni*). Earthy lived with the Valenge for 13 years (September 1917 to December 1930) where she learned many things from the Valenge and Vacopi of surnames such as Vilankulu, Nkumbe, Makwakwa, N'wamusi, Masiye and many others.

According to native tradition the VaTjopi and the VaLenge were one race. This was the account given me by Johane Makamu, an old MuLenge:

Starting long ago, when the VaDgoni (Zulu under Manukosi) had not yet arrived, the VaTjopi and the VaLenge had been one race from of old indeed. And also after that when the VaDgoni arrived, they find all the countries with their own chiefs. And all the chiefs had fortified kraals and their people. The fortified kraals resemble cattle kraals. When the army of the VaDgoni arrived, then they run, they enter into their kraals. Also those chiefs, they did not join up with another chief, but each one reigned in his own kraal with his people, while they were all one race, the VaTjopi.¹ Think, the country of the VaTjopi starts from Chongoene and reaches Inharrime. But when they see each other, they call each other by the direction of the winds, like this: on the side of the west, they call it VuLenge (West), while all are of one race. Seeing the side of the east, they call it VuTsonga, and this means VuTjopi, while all are of one race, they are VaTjopi. Their affairs are very much alike indeed.

(Image source: Earthy 1933)

- Many people have tried to define the Tsonga, Tonga, or Ronga names in their own terms. The names, however, are certainly much older than the period of the last *Mfecane* or the emergence of large-scale Nguni wars from the 1600s to 1800s in parts of South Africa. Tonga as a name in Mozambique was already in use and identified by the Portuguese in records of the period 1400s-1500s even before the arrival of the Karanga of the mid 1500s in that area (Maluleke 2021), and Ronga as a name in South Africa and Mozambique was already in use by the Mfumo and Nondwane in the 1500s (Junod 1912), who are certainly African relatives of the Nguni (brother nations) as with other Tsonga groups.

The Nguni people today are identified as a language group that includes, amongst others, the Zulus, Swatis, Ndebeles, and the various Xhosa sub-groups, many of whom descend from the Tonga, Embo, Tswa, and Ndaui people, though some do appear to originate from the first groups of the original Nguni cluster that migrated to

the south through parts of Kenya and Malawi. An indication of the old relationship between the Nguni and Tsonga is that phonetic laws in the Nguni languages, particularly isiZulu, will sometimes replace the Xirhonga and Xitsonga 'Rh' with a 'Th'. A given example is the word "*Rhanda*" which in isiZulu becomes "*Thanda*" (Love); "*Rhuma*" which becomes "*Thuma*" (Send); and "*Rharhu*" (Third) becomes "*Thathu*". This gives indications of a distant relationship as groups of the same African people from the times of the first migrations into southern Africa. In addition to this, Zulu words that begin with the letter "T" are pronounced with an appellation followed with an "H", hence where it should be written and pronounced as "Tonga" the Zulu speakers would pronounce it as "Thonga". All this indicates a strong African link between the Xitsonga and Nguni language groups among others.

Because the Tembe and Rhonga people lived closer to the Zulus than any of the other Tsonga tribes, they referred to all Xitsonga-speakers as "amaThonga" (Junod 1912, p. 15). However the name "Tonga" or "Vatonga" is the appropriate usage in the native language of the Tsonga and the name itself is much older than the Zulu reference where various groups in many parts of southern Africa still recognise with the ancient history of the name. The land of the Tembe for example had been known internationally as Amatongaland before it was incorporated into KwaZulu Natal.

- Vatsonga tribes (dispersed, independent villages) have regularly come under invasions from various groups in the past, such as the Arabs, the Portuguese, Banguni, Vhavenda, and Boer trekkers between the year 1200 up till 1900 (a seven hundred year period) but they have largely been able to preserve their independence and particular language and culture.

- The Vatsonga have largely managed to sustain their *Vutsonga* cultural identity and traditional practices despite many attempts to suppress these, for example missionary efforts to suppress the material culture and traditional lifestyle in church settings have received minimal reception and the older women continued to dress in the bright traditional clothing regardless of the conversion into Christianity of many of the close relatives. The Vatsonga in South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Swaziland, for example, share a heritage stretching over 800 years. There has indeed been a common establishment with similar cultural practices and a related group of dialects that evolved into stable languages before the *Mfecane* of the 1800s and before the Berlin Conference that divided Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe by national borders.
- Vatsonga are one of the main people ("*Bantu*") groups to have dispersed from the Great Lakes region or around Central and eastern Africa to have formed a unique cultural identity in southern Africa, along with people groups such as the Nguni, Sotho, Tswana, Vhavenda, and the Vakaranga etc.
- Vatsonga have played a significant role in the formation of various cultural identities in different parts of southern Africa, and their language has played a role in the development of other related languages and dialects.
- The Vatsonga mastered trade along the Mozambique area and were dominant in trade with Asian travellers from early on before the 1600s. Towards the 1800s the Vatsonga began to be involved in trade with the Portuguese more frequently than they had been. According to Bandama (2013), the Vatsonga often travelled for long

distances to trade, and they learned to interact with people from different cultures across southern Africa from a very early time.

- The name Vatsonga describes a group of people within South Africa, southern Mozambique, and parts of Zimbabwe, made up of several clans who share a common history and cultural identity and speak a variation or dialect of Xirhonga, Xitswa, Xicopi, Xitembe, or Xitsonga. The word '*Vutsonga*' describes their way of life in a traditional sense as well as their geographic location (East and South-East) – not to be confused with vudzonga which means "South". Xitsonga refers to the people's united language as it has progressed through time within Mozambique and South Africa. A few examples of the culture in its true distinctness: the Nkuna and Valoyi, for example, came to adopt the same patterns of tattooing as the Chopi and Tonga groups of Inhambane Province; and also, both the Nkuna and Valoyi embraced male circumcision as with most other Vatsonga while, for example, the Nxumalos of Bushbuckridge did not adopt either of these customs. This way of life is considered part of *vutsonga* or the eastern traditional way and shows the distinct nature of the Tsonga people in relation to other groups.

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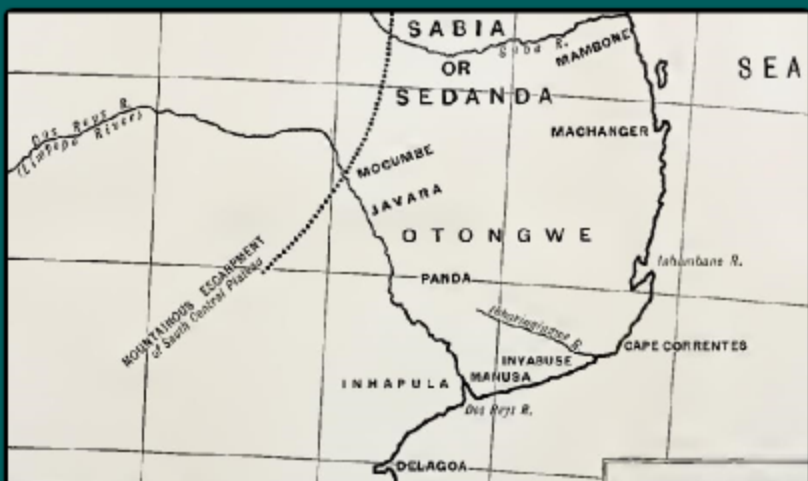
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This research is an uncensored history guide for lessons on Tsonga History. It gives an analysis of the historical movements and cultural significance of the Xitsonga-speaking people of southern Africa. The book is best suited for teaching and learning purposes. It also looks at commonly misinterpreted historical factors and offers an alternative view of looking at history. References are given where necessary in an effort to collect as much reliable information as possible, while linking these to oral traditions and local folklore in order to come to a better understanding of history. Sources were carefully analysed and those that correlate more with known traditions, oral history, and the praise poetry of the Xitsonga-speaking people are especially pointed out.

